Commentary

VOLUME NINETY • NUMBER FIVE • NOVEMBER 1990

IRAQ: Why and How the U.S. Should Strike

Eliot A. Cohen

Norman Podhoretz

Harold Bloom's "J"
Robert Alter

Living With Roe v. Wade
Margaret Liu McConnell

The Nuclear Bubble
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Race Fever
Edward Alexander

In Poland Again
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Books in Review: Carol Iannone on Styron's "Darkness Visible"/ George Russell / Dana Mack / Austin Ranney

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Commentary

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Editor
Neal Kozodoy

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Letters from Readers

Japan and Free Trade

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Irwin M. Stelzer's "How to Save Free Trade—and Still Trade With Japan" [July] is . . . sensible, but I would like to raise a minor though possibly important point. Years ago when I first studied economics, my teacher, Henry Simons, emphasized that if you have some industry which it is desirable for military reasons to preserve, the best way of doing so is to give it a subsidy. The advantage of a subsidy over a tariff is simply that a subsidy is somewhat harder for special-interest groups to manipulate. In order to do so, such groups must actually get themselves a sizable appropriation against the opposition of everyone else who wants to spend the government's money, so it is easier to get a tariff or quota to protect them. Because the cost of the subsidy is more directly visible, it is less likely that the citizens will put up with it.

Although I first learned this long ago, it seems to have dropped out of the discussion almost completely, perhaps because the cost of this kind of protection is so highly visible that the pressure groups normally don't aim for it. Thus, it has ceased to be part of our politics. Nevertheless, it is a better way of handling things, and in fact has economic advantages for protecting a genuine strategic interest as well as political virtues.

Mr. Stelzer, of course, is correct in saying that a number of alleged justifications for tariffs have been invented recently. In general, however, it takes a great deal of brain power to invent them. The bright people who do the inventing normally point out that these are merely intellectual curiosities with little or no practical value. They will usually say that for practical purposes free trade is the best we can do. It is the second level of economists—those who are looking for a justification for government actions and don't really care very much what they are—who have given the inventions of the bright people the currency they now have. . . .

GORDON TULLOCK
Karl Eller Professor of Economics and Political Science
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Irwin M. Stelzer's article is one of the most sensible and balanced pieces on Japanese-American trade relations I have read in recent years. However, he does overlook one important point. While it is true that the overall American bilateral trade deficit with Japan has little economic significance, its composition does matter. Japan's unwillingness to import a wide range of competitive American high-technology products provides Japanese producers with a protected market that they can then use as a base for challenging American firms in the U.S.—where markets are more open. That is why it is vital for the future of America's "strategic" industries that the Japanese open their markets.

DAVID VOGEL
University of California
Berkeley, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I expect that Irwin M. Stelzer's "How to Save Free Trade—and Still Trade With Japan" will so impress many readers that any suggested correction will seem as inappropriate as new brushwork to broaden the smile of the Mona Lisa. Such is the historic prestige of the doctrine of free trade that Mr. Stelzer embraces. The theory in outline dates back to Adam Smith, its formal proof to David Ricardo, its initial victory in practice to repeal of Great Britain's notorious "corn laws," smoothing the way for the industrial revolution.

But Ricardo was not only (with Smith) one of history's two most illustrious economists, he was also an eminently successful man of business. He would have been the first to recognize when the relevant facts in a particular situation departed from the conventional assumptions of theory. Specifically, he would have perceived the two major cases in modern times in which a free-trade policy would be not only unwise but distinctly counterproductive. Neither situation is acknowledged by Mr. Stelzer, though one is central to his argument.

The first arises when countries are at vastly different stages of development. A less-developed country of the Third World today, for example, might well benefit by protecting a promising local indus-

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try from the superior efficiency of more advanced nations until it had matured sufficiently to compete on its own. In principle, no one to my knowledge denies the wisdom of that judgment, though many quite properly question how objectively and wisely local officials would apply the remedy in practice.

A second situation in which trade may be not only injudicious but dangerously foolish cuts to the very heart of Mr. Stelzer's concern with Japanese-American relations. It arises when trading partners follow radically different domestic economic and social policies. Thus, in contrast with the U.S., the Japanese economy is in large degree under central direction. A spirit of active mercantilist cooperation prevails. The Japanese government encourages local business combinations and monopolies which in the U.S. would be illegal. It also protects them firmly against foreign competition by tariffs and informal barriers that are even more impenetrable.

That setting allows a distinctive form of economic aggression called in economic parlance "oligopolistic price discrimination." At home, the trade barriers provide conveniently inelastic demand curves, so that Japanese companies can charge prices high enough above average costs to yield maximum monopoly profits. Local living standards are incidentally squeezed, but on the positive side of the ledger is the growing industrial might of the nation. For with the huge profits accumulated at home, Japanese firms are enabled to sell their excess output at abnormally low ("cutthroat") prices throughout the world and especially in its most enticing market, the U.S.

About this, Mr. Stelzer advises, in effect, "Lie back and enjoy it." His recommended policy of "unilateral free trade" involves accepting the bargain prices, contracting American production in the affected industries as required, and reallocating resources to more fruitful uses. Would that life were that simple, in business or elsewhere.

Owing to Japanese tactics, a few American industries have been virtually extinguished, most notably consumer electronics; many others have been severely curtailed, including important branches of the chemical industry and the production of semiconductors, steel, and of course automobiles. The Big Three automobile manufacturers recently dropped to two domestic companies as Honda replaced Chrysler. Is there any reason to suppose that as victories accumulate Japan will refrain from further exploitation of its advantage? Its bargain prices in foreign markets bear no irrevocable guarantee. In America, prices for Japanese consumer electronics have already risen from their temporary rock bottom, although, with crafty precision, not enough to reignite American competition. The same tactic is blossoming in the other industries they now dominate. It would be a grave mistake to suppose that the objective of Japanese business is foreign charity.

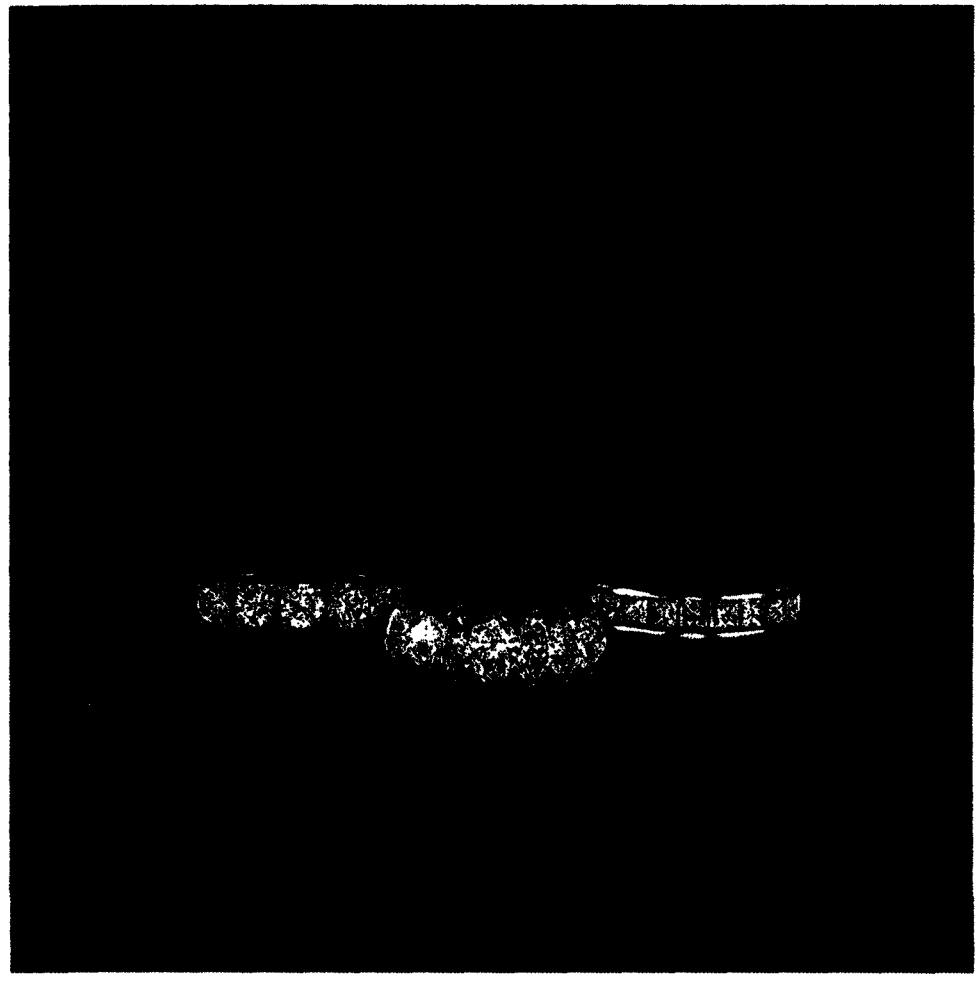
Fortunately the Bush administration and its point woman in foreign trade, Carla Hills, are well aware of the dangers. Hence they are not about to turn first one cheek, and then the other in determined addiction to Mr. Stelzer's unilateral free trade. Nor are they about to erect a Fortress America. They do seem determined to use stubborn diplomacy backed by a readiness to retaliate with our own tariffs when necessary against aggressors. By all authoritative accounts, American industry does not need or seek special advantages, but as its exponents explain, it does require "a level playing field."

MELVILLE J. ULMER
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Irwin M. Stelzer's article, a polemic on the virtues of free trade, rests its argument upon two fundamental propositions: (1) the theory of comparative advantage, and (2) the primacy of individual consumer preference. To point out what I feel is wrong with Mr. Stelzer's argument, and by extension with economic liberalism in general, I would like to address the first of these.

The issue of comparative advantage sounds deceptively self-evident when we are talking about, say, importing bananas from Honduras rather than growing them in gas-fed hothouses in upper Michigan; but it is decisively less so when we



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start discussing more substantial, sophisticated products that are the hallmarks of advanced technological economies. For instance, Japan is terribly deficient in natural resources—from coal, to iron ore, to cheap sources of electrical generation used in the production of automobiles; yet as Mr. Stelzer readily admits, the Japanese produce quality cars more cheaply than we do, and he furthermore advises us that we should buy them and conserve our resources for what we in turn do best. What Mr. Stelzer fails to point out here, however, is that a relatively short time ago we in the United States possessed the comparative advantage in the manufacture of automobiles, as we did in the manufacture of consumer electronics, steel, computer chips, machine tools, robotics, copiers, and a whole host of other key technologies that are central to generating and sustaining an advanced economy.

To imply that, following the logic of comparative advantage, we somehow ceded these industries to the Japanese so that we could devote our resources to more profitable and productive venues in the economy is to strain all credibility. And if that is not what is implied here, then the more important question is to delve a bit into how the Japanese managed to secure a comparative advantage in these areas. . . .

What they did, in effect, was to suffer a short-term comparative disadvantage—refusing to buy the cheaper and better-made American products in the industries listed above—in order to give their own companies the cushion in time, resources, and a protected domestic market to develop the economies of scale and the long-range investment horizon needed to achieve eventual primacy in these areas. In doing this, they have been phenomenally, if not admirably, successful. . . . And mind you, this is not some temporary aberration in the market that promises to reverse itself as soon as the distorting influences are removed.

Again, in contradiction to liberal economic precepts, government guidance, subsidy, and sheltering from competition did not result in bloated, inefficient, and corrupt consortiums, but rather in markedly aggressive and competitive companies, so much so that it is the free-trade countries that are unable effectively to compete with the Japanese and are driven to demand government protection.

If I were a liberal economist I would be hard-pressed to explain these unsettling realities. . . . However, I am, thankfully, a conservative and can present a logical explanation from the vantage point of that venerable perspective. I believe that the Japanese have been able to do what they have done by treating their economy as a collective entity organized around long-term common goals rather than as a disparate aggregation of atomized, self-seeking individuals with the short-term satisfaction horizon of the consumer. In short, they are conservatives rather than liberals in their views, both economically and otherwise. . . .

By organizing their economic activity around a higher and more abstract goal—the collective productivity of the nation rather than the individual satisfaction of the consumer—the Japanese are able to marshal the best efforts of their people, for they have something greater than their own selfish ends to work for. Again, this is an unfathomable paradox for liberal economists who have seen such altruistic exhortations fail miserably under socialism. And they do fail when they have to be imposed on people, rather than emerging from the organic conditions of their culture.

The key, however, to the Japanese success is that their economic structure and prerogatives work in harmony with their sustaining cultural heritage, rather than undermining it as we see here in America, for the primacy of the consumer is certainly eroding our capacity—morally, culturally, politically, economically—to preserve and replenish that which we need to ensure a healthy and productive future. For an untutored market left to its own ends has yielded some unsavory results in our country: high-school students who neglect their studies to take minimum-wage jobs so they can satisfy their consumer preference for $100 sneakers and designer clothes; college students who neglect science, engineering, and the classics in favor of more fashionable M.B.A.'s, J.D.'s, and B.A.'s in victimology; parents who neglect their children in pursuit of their own consumer preferences; and corporate executives who plan not for the long-run health of their companies but for the short-term sizzle of the quarterly profit sheet, goaded on as they are by mercurial investors who will dump their shares at the first flash of a better deal.

In order to correct these debilitating conditions, and get our society as a whole back on the right track, we need to acknowledge frankly that the precepts of economic liberalism are in urgent need of a revision that will restore that vital link between individual self-interest and long-range national goals. . . .

LEONARD BAKKER
Berkeley, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Irwin M. Stelzer does not go as far as a dedicated "free-trader" should go in policy prescriptions. His policy options are too limited.

The choice he offers is between (1) unilateral free trade (which he correctly deems politically not viable), (2) protectionism (which he correctly deems too costly), and (3) his preferred middle ground of retaliatory reciprocity—a political safety valve against protectionism at home and a credible threat capable of inducing our trading partners "to think twice before erecting their own trade barriers." He says it should be "aimed at the elusive goal of freer trade, rather than at mere revenge."

He neglects another, more constructive option, indeed a more far-reaching conception of reciprocity—namely, a definitive, deliberate, explicitly free-trade strategy. Not unilateral free trade, but (a) a foreign-economic initiative aimed at programming (in accordance with a realistic timetable) totally free and totally fair trade with Japan and as many other countries as may care to enter into such a compact with us, and (b) a domestic-adjustment strategy to secure and sustain political support for such a trade policy and help ensure the greatest national benefits from such a trade agreement. Not ruling out retaliatory reciprocity in responding to trade barriers and practices that violate the agreement, the policy I propose would aim for the ultimate and the optimum in trade reciprocity—totally free and, inseparably, totally fair trade between the contracting parties.

The promised land of free-and-fair trade among the participating countries may not be reached until some far distant date (if ever). Emergencies may cause departures from the agreed-on schedule (al-

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though the standards for such exceptions should be very strict). However, the very existence of the compact can produce great results (possibly fulfilling the highest expectations), and deserves our best efforts. The needs of less-developed countries—countries not capable of the same schedule of commitments that the economically advanced countries can fulfill—would call for special interim arrangements concerning their trade relations with members of the free-trade area.

Mr. Stelzer believes in multilateral market-opening measures. He should pursue this to its logical, most productive conclusion. He says Japan is very different from our country in many ways. I agree that "policies aimed at transforming Japan into an island America, or America into a somewhat larger Japan, are doomed to failure." But I challenge his view that "a policy based on forcing [Japan] to change is doomed to failure." Substantial, constructive change in Japan's economy, and our own, is conceivable through the dynamics of the free-trade strategy I have long been advocating.

I am not a free-trade ideologue unmindful of political and economic realities at home and abroad. I am a veteran of trade-policy "wars" going back decades, convinced that a carefully crafted strategy to program free and fair trade is a viable economic and political venture. With hardly an exception, America's "free-traders" have shunned this new frontier in trade policy which I pioneered twenty-five years ago. I invite them, including Mr. Stelzer, to join me.

DAVID J. STEINBERG
Alexandria, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was rather appalled to see references to William Baumol, Sue Anne Batey Blackman, and Edward N. Wolff, *Productivity and American Leadership: The Long View*, MIT Press, 1989, reduced to "William Baumol and colleagues" and, in most places, simply "William Baumol," in Irwin M. Stelzer's article. Since the book was fully coauthored by the three of us, the proper citation is "William Baumol, Sue Anne Batey Blackman, and Edward N. Wolff," or "Baumol, Blackman, and Wolff." Moreover, since this book was also reviewed in the same issue of the magazine, I do not think the editor could have claimed ignorance of the citation as an excuse.

EDWARD N. WOLFF
Department of Economics
New York University
New York City

Productivity and American Leadership: The Long View *was reviewed (by Melville J. Ulmer), with all the correct citations, in the May, not the July, issue; a footnote in Mr. Stelzer's article referred the reader to that review.*—ED.

IRWIN M. STELZER writes:

It is difficult to quarrel with Gordon Tullock and Edward N. Wolff. Mr. Tullock's preference for direct, visible subsidies over tariffs as a means of protecting "some industry which it is desirable for military reasons to preserve" is quite correct, although I hope he shares my nervousness about the ability of industries only tangentially related to our security to argue that their survival is necessary to the survival of the nation. Edward N. Wolff's annoyance at the magazine's footnote style is understandable, although being upstaged by so able a colleague as William Baumol should ease his pain.

As for David Vogel, his letter makes me wonder about two things. First, just what does he mean by "strategic"? If he is referring to industries that are demonstrably crucial to our security, I would go further than he does and, if necessary, directly subsidize such industries. But if Mr. Vogel is merely using "strategic" synonymously with "high technology," as he seems to be doing, I would not distinguish such industries from any others: we should do all we can to open Japanese markets to all our industries, "high technology" and otherwise.

Second, Mr. Vogel fears that Japan will use its protected market to nourish its own, initially uncompetitive firms, which will then use their domestic production base to challenge American companies. That is a deceptively simple formulation. It assumes that economies of scale and the learning curve are such as to permit such a strategy to succeed. If that is the case, one wonders why the Soviet Union's industries, long protected from foreign competition, are not now poised to challenge us from their protected base. The answer may well be that protection breeds uncompetitive enterprises rather than international economic powerhouses.

Which brings me to Melville J. Ulmer, Leonard Bakker, and David J. Steinberg. The first two feel I am somehow unrealistic, or wrong, or both, to support free trade in what Mr. Bakker characterizes as "a polemic" on its virtues. Mr. Steinberg, on the other hand, feels I have not gone "as far as a dedicated 'free-trader' should go. . . ." I suppose I should take comfort from being criticized by both those who favor a more protectionist policy than I espouse and those who lean toward even freer trade. I do—but not enough to permit me to leave these correspondents unanswered.

Mr. Ulmer accuses me of not having "acknowledged" two major "cases" in which free trade is counterproductive. He is wrong. The first such case he cites is nothing more than the hoary "infant-industry" argument, considered in my article and disguised by Mr. Ulmer in the more sympathetic garb of "a less-developed country of the Third World." Such countries, Mr. Ulmer argues, "might well benefit by protecting a *promising* local industry" (emphasis added) until it achieved sufficient muscle to compete in world markets. Note that for Mr. Ulmer to be right some Third World bureaucrat would have to have the foresight denied to all save a few: the ability to separate "promising" from unpromising industries. Indeed, said official would have to be able to do this more efficiently than all of the world's entrepreneurs and investment bankers, who I point out in my article are in a constant search for just such promising opportunities. In any event, I leave to Mr. Ulmer the chore of identifying Third World countries that have protected themselves into prosperity.

Mr. Ulmer's second case, which he feels "cuts to the very heart" of my argument, relates to the differences between Japan and America. The Japanese rely, he says, on "central direction" of their economy, cartelization, and protection; we don't. Some of that is true, as I pointed out in what I hope was a realistic recitation of Japanese efforts to tilt the playing field in their favor. Indeed, so entrenched are many of these practices that I expressed great pessimism as to the desire and ability of the Japanese to abandon them. So I suppose we agree, although I fail to see how recognition of this fact supports an

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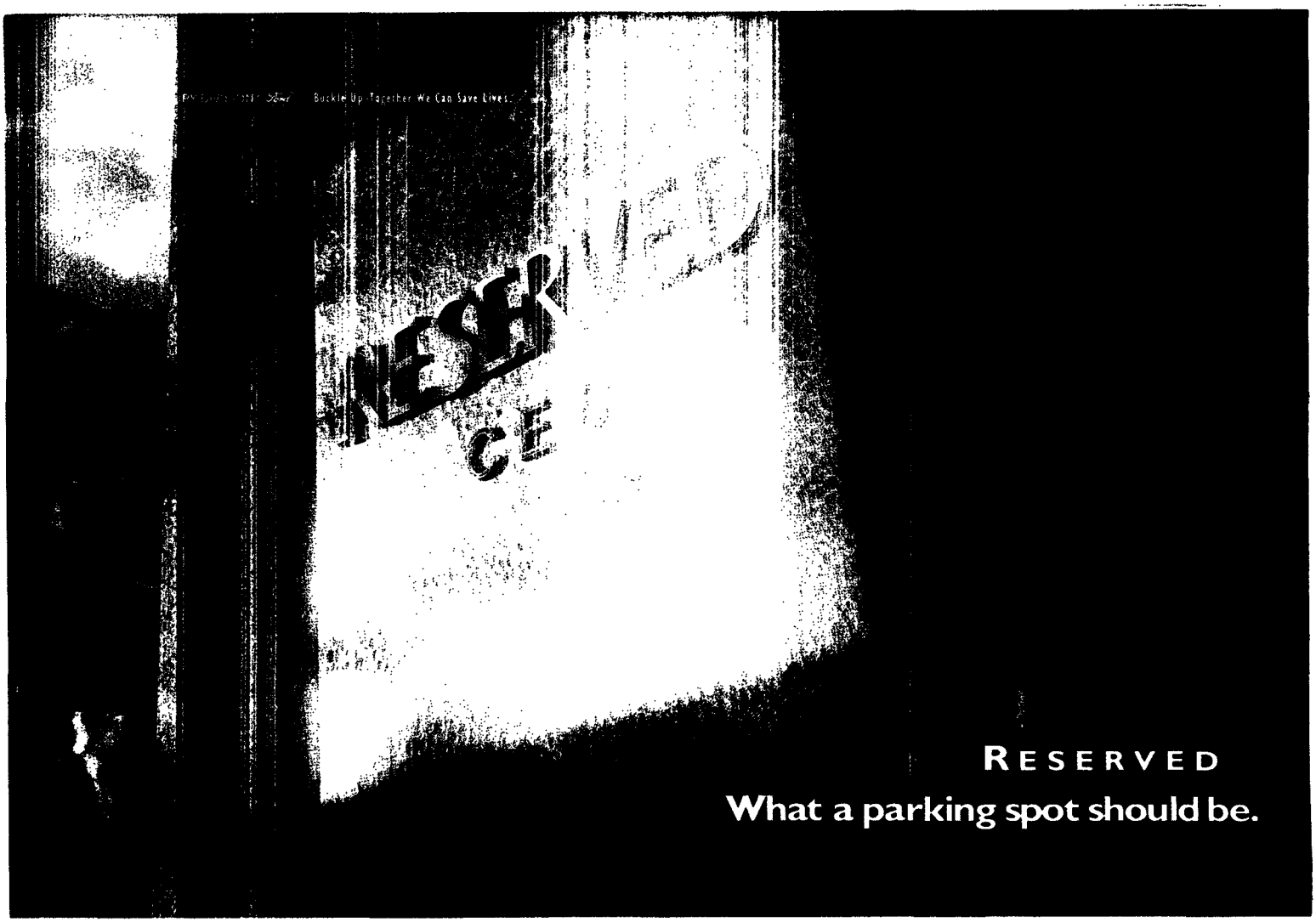

argument for protectionism. After all, the French believe in more government regulation than we do, the German banks exert a great, centralizing influence on companies there, and Latin America remains dominated by government enterprises. Should we close our markets to all of them, in an orgy of protectionist response?

Mr. Ulmer also complains about the decline of certain American industries, in the face of Japanese competition. And he fears that, once dominant, Japanese firms will raise prices and exploit American consumers. There are three problems with this argument.

The first is that in any dynamic economy some industries will decline, and others emerge, regardless of the "unfairness" of the practices of its trading partners. As I pointed out, America's overall share of world output—25 percent—is about where it was in 1900, 1938, and 1960. We may make fewer of the world's cars, but we make just as large a share of all products as we ever did. So the fact that some of our industries have declined while others have grown, tells us very little about the effects of our trading policies.

The second problem with Mr. Ulmer's argument can be captured by a question: "So what?" Replacement of Chrysler by Honda, to use Mr. Ulmer's example, should hardly be a source of worry. American consumers are getting better cars, cheaper, from a manufacturer increasingly shifting its manufacturing operations to America. Indeed, Chrysler is an example Mr. Ulmer should eschew. Bailed out by the government, protected by "voluntary restraint agreements," the company is probably America's largest welfare recipient. And still it can't compete. Would Mr. Ulmer have us increase the level of protection already afforded Chrysler?

Third, it is important to keep in mind an unstated assumption of Mr. Ulmer's thesis. For the Japanese to raise prices in American markets they would have to drive all American firms from the market, eliminate all competitors in other countries, themselves act in concert, and be certain that their higher prices did not attract new competition. That is not impossible: predation of the type that worries Mr. Ulmer can occur. But prices are less likely to rise to monopolistic levels if we keep our markets open to competition from all countries than if we protect a few of our oligopolists from the outside world.

Perhaps the most puzzling of Mr. Ulmer's criticisms is his charge that I would have us "lie back" and accept whatever the Japanese do. Not so, as any careful reading of my article reveals. I specifically urged a policy of reciprocity, including retaliation where necessary to "induce one's trading partners to think twice before erecting . . . trade barriers." Mr. Ulmer's conclusion that I would have us "turn first one cheek, and then the other in determined addiction to . . . unilateral free trade" is particularly surprising, since I specifically said that we might wish "we were the economic version of good Christians, capable of turning the other cheek in the face of Japanese trade practices, but we are not."

And so to Mr. Bakker. All I can say is that what seems evident in Berkeley is often less clear to the rest of us. Mr. Bakker attacks what he calls "economic liberalism," and recommends to us an alternative vision, one of "a collective entity organized around long-term common goals." This would re-

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place the individualism that is "eroding our capacity" to achieve a "healthy and productive future."

How Mr. Bakker explains much of the world's dash from the gray privation of collectivism to the vibrant affluence of economies organized around individualism I do not know. Nor do I know how many share his aversion to high-school students taking part-time jobs. I had always thought that desirable, and my recollection is that those who delivered flowers, laundry, and newspapers after school seemed to be at the top of their class. But I do know that Mr. Bakker's certainty that the Japanese have achieved *enduring* success (watch their performance in the next few months), and at tolerable cost (Japanese consumers still live in cramped houses, far from the workplaces to which they travel six days each week, and devote 50 percent more of their income to paying for food than we do), is misplaced. In any event, he concedes that the penchant of the Japanese for central direction of their economy springs from "the organic conditions of their culture" and would "fail miserably . . . when . . . imposed on people." So what is his policy prescription? It eludes me.

Mr. Steinberg is more difficult to argue with. He favors free trade, but would not rule out "retaliatory reciprocity." I agree. A compact heading us toward freer trade "deserves our best efforts." I agree. A substantial improvement in Japan's approach to trade "is conceivable." I hope so, but am less certain, for reasons I outlined in my article.

But I find both the "what" and the "how-to" elusive. Mr. Steinberg would, first, foster an "initiative aimed at programming" totally free trade with all countries who would "enter into such a compact with us." I would love to see America give such a party, but I fear few would attend. And if some who do accept are from south of our border, the host himself may flee the room, chased by trade unions and liberal Democrats who want to protect the workingman from being yoked to the interests of the consumers Mr. Bakker so despises.

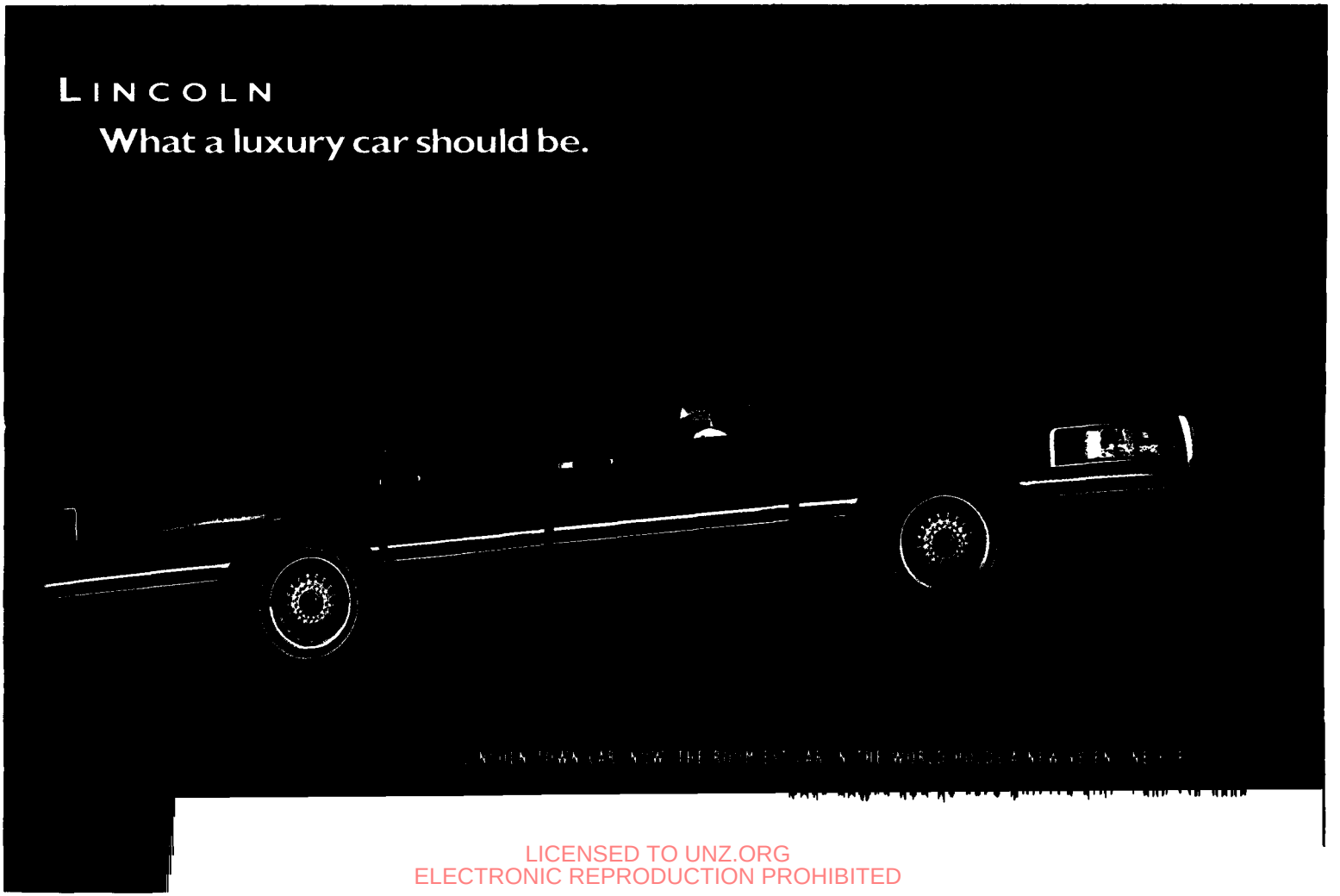
The second plank in Mr. Steinberg's platform is to aid those injured by freer trade so as to sustain political support for the policy. Unfortunately, such aid has not in the past salved the hurt of displaced workers sufficiently to make them fans of David Ricardo and Adam Smith. Or proved to be temporary. In short, his "domestic-adjustment strategy" of pay-outs to the injured is a medicine to be administered with great care as to its side-effects.

Unfortunately Mr. Steinberg's good intentions are no substitute for a specific plan to reduce trade barriers. I fear that only the policy of reciprocity that I laid out in my article—hang tough, bargain hard, take actions that may be contrary to our short-term interests if necessary to establish our bargaining credibility—can in the end preserve the liberal trading regime most thoughtful policy-makers agree is crucial to continued prosperity.

The Anti-Communists

To the Editor of Commentary:

In Sam Tanenhaus's refresher course on anti-Communists ["What the Anti-Communists Knew," July], he offers Friedrich A. Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*—a classic, no doubt about it. Yet he should be made aware that most of what Hayek learned about socialism was at the knee of his mentor,



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Ludwig Von Mises, one of the greatest minds this century ever produced, until his death in 1972. Von Mises was the most profoundly creative of the founders of the Austrian school of economics whose free-market theories the world ignored until recent events compelled respectful attention to them.

It was Von Mises's original paper, "Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth," in 1920 which first cracked the very foundations of socialism. He then expanded his argument in a series of articles in 1922 culminating in "Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis," which demolished point-by-point every premise held by socialist thinkers.

Von Mises was able to predict with deadly accuracy in these early writings the economic chaos and eventual demise of the socialist state that we are currently witnessing in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. He demonstrated conclusively that socialist planners would be without a genuine pricing system for the means of production. They would be unable to calculate properly the costs, productivity, or profitability of resources, and hence could never allocate such resources rationally in a contemporary economy. This would always be socialism's "Achilles heel," and its central planners were doomed from the beginning.

Rational planning and resource allocation require the ability to engage in economic calculation. Such calculation, in turn, requires that resource prices be set in free markets where titles of ownership are exchanged by owners of private property. But since the very hallmark of socialism was absolute control of all land and capital, such calculations were impossible. For a government rationally to allocate its resources in a world of scarcity, a system must exist in which prices are based on a private owner's evaluation of his goods. There is no way for a government to calculate such values directly.

Such was the enormous influence of Ludwig Von Mises that he converted many young socialists to the cause of free markets, among them Friedrich Hayek. That these young men became followers and disciples of Von Mises detracts in no way from Hayek, a brilliant thinker in his own right, who eventually won a Nobel prize. Still, . . . let us never forget the granddaddy of them all, to whom even Hayek has acknowledged his debt when he wrote that . . . Von Mises "must be compared to thinkers like Voltaire or Montesquieu, Tocqueville, and John Stuart Mill."

SAM TISCHLER
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Among the partners Sam Tanenhaus selected with whom to dance on the grave of Communism are two of very different persuasions: Milovan Djilas, . . . a democratic socialist, and Friedrich A. Hayek, an unregenerate free-marketeer who feared democracy as a tool of the poor to expropriate the rich.

The tendentiousness of Hayek's focus—his unrelenting commitment to making ideological points at any cost to intellectual integrity—is well illustrated in the methodology he employs in *The Road to Serfdom*. As Mr. Tanenhaus describes it, "He wanted to locate the ideological place where Western idealism intersected Eastern totalitarianism." On the other hand, what Hayek assuredly did not want to do was to locate that ideological place where Western *conservatism* and Eastern totalitarianism intersect.

In the idyllic world of independent self-employed artisans who inhabit the approved paradigm of economic relations in liberal thought, there is no such place. But in contemporary industrial capitalism, where over three out of every four members of the work force are proletarianized and subject—as in the erstwhile Soviet model—to the regulation of "internal markets" in large corporations, that locus is unquestionably the subordination to a hierarchical structure of domination.

It follows that to define political orientation on the basis of commitment to "private" versus "public" ownership of the means of production is to establish a false dichotomy, although one that is convenient—even necessary—to the dominant class of both systems: the Right of every system supports a structure of power and privilege; the authentic Left of every system possesses, in the words of Djilas, "an imperishable desire to be their own masters. . . ."

Hayek did make one unassailable statement—that money "is one of the greatest instruments of freedom ever invented by man" has never been disputed by its possessors. Its corollary is embodied in the more profound affirmation of Rousseau: "No citizen should ever be wealthy enough to buy another, and none poor enough to be forced to sell himself." It is this human state which the newly economically liberated of Eastern Europe will find capitalism denies.

J. W. BARCHFIELD
University of Guanajuato
Guanajuato, Mexico

SAM TANENHAUS writes:

It is unfair of J. W. Barchfield to set Friedrich A. Hayek against Milovan Djilas. Hayek described himself in *The Road to Serfdom* as a liberal and, by way of clarification, wrote: "The essence of the liberal position . . . is the denial of all privilege, if privilege is understood in its proper and original meaning of the state granting and protecting rights to some which are not available on equal terms to others." It was the betrayal of this ideal, among others, that appalled each of the authors whom I discussed in my article—no matter what they happened to think about capitalism—and that united them in opposition to the authoritarian regimes that attained such prestige in the middle decades of the 20th century. The fine words of Rousseau quoted by Mr. Barchfield are emptied of meaning in a society, whether Communist or fascist, that subjugates all its citizens to the high-minded coercions of the state.

I am grateful to Sam Tischler for his illuminating remarks.

Hebrew

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I agree with Ruth R. Wisse ["The Hebrew Imperative," June] that Hebrew and English are necessary for Jewish survival, but I would urge a course in remedial English for the countless Jews who out of ignorance use or accept . . . language that reflects non-Jewish definitions, interpretations, . . . attitudes, and values. For example, many Jews use the term "pharisaic" pejoratively; "crusade" or "crusader" honorifically; "gospel" to stand for unchallengeable truth; "The Lord's Prayer" for the name of the prayer that a sensitive Christian would call "The Pater Noster" or the "Our Father" in conversation with a Jew.

I find it sadly ironic that there are . . . Jewish writers who refer to the Hebrew Scriptures as the "Old

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Testament" and who use the word "Bible" to refer to the Christian Bible.

What good is it to learn Hebrew if we don't know who we are?

BERNARD ADELMAN
Winthrop, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There is something crucial missing from Ruth R. Wisse's excellent article, "The Hebrew Imperative," and, indeed, that which is missing makes her own English-spoken point perfectly: holiness just doesn't come up. . . . But the very absence of holiness is at the core of why being a Jew in translation, rather than interacting with traditional texts, is so dangerous.

The Hebrew of the Bible is unlike any other language. Studying it is different from studying English or French, or other Semitic languages, or even later versions of Hebrew. There is really no such thing as learning Hebrew apart from learning Torah. It is the entry to all of Jewish history, indeed to Jewishness itself. Everything else in Jewish literature is written in other languages (including other Hebrew), about this one book or, better, *because* of this one book and what it says. And the most crucial thing it tells us is to study it, to participate in it, to turn it over and over and examine it, to become conversant with it. . . . Personal interaction with the text of Torah, with biblical Hebrew—handling and thinking about the words themselves—is an act of Jewishness, an act of transformation toward holiness. . . .

RACHEL EBNER
Jersey City, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Ruth R. Wisse's argument is neither historically nor halakhically valid. The talmudic sages who formulated the Judaism that was normative for all until the 19th century—and remains so for many today—did not consider Hebrew essential to its survival. Although they valued, encouraged, and praised its use, they did not make it obligatory for either the daily liturgy or the writing of a Torah scroll. . . . They furthermore identified Moses himself as the Torah's first translator, thereby obviating, in theory at least, the problem of "second-rate interpreters."

From the beginning of the post-biblical era . . . until this century Hebrew was not widely used or known by the general population of any Jewish community, and barely known at all by its female half. This applies not only to general but also to religious use. Even among the *tannaim*, the sages of the Mishnah (ca. 20-200 C.E), expertise in Hebrew was apparently limited to a small elite, and the later *amoraim* (3rd-6th centuries) chose Aramaic over Hebrew for their halakhic discussions, not to mention their homilies. Possibly beginning in the days of Ezra, the weekly public Torah reading was translated, verse by verse, into Aramaic, except for portions that the religious authorities deemed better left untranslated. . . .

Post-talmudic halakhic works by authorities in Muslim lands were generally written in Aramaic or Arabic, Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* being the most prominent exception. Saadyah Gaon's pioneering Bible commentary was written in Arabic. The Kaddish and other prayers and halakhic formulas and documents that were considered essential for all to understand were written in Aramaic. Jewish poets of Spain's "Golden Age" wrote in Hebrew less for religious reasons than to counter claims of Arabic cultural superiority. In Christian lands commentators on the Bible and Talmud, writing in Hebrew, often resorted to the vernacular to make sure they were understood. The knowledge of Hebrew acquired in the lower schools of Eastern Europe and New York's Lower East Side was generally inadequate for understanding, let alone appreciating, the words of Isaiah. . . .

From an aesthetic or literary perspective, the continued decline of basic Hebrew literacy would certainly be lamentable. From a historical or educational perspective, it would represent a slightly greater degree of ignorance than was prevalent in the past. But from a religious or existential perspective, it would not be tragic, nor would it contribute to the demise of Jewish civilization. What has preserved Jewish civilization in the Diaspora for two millennia is Judaism, and what has preserved and in fact defined Judaism during this period is not Hebrew but Halakhah, not land or language but a legal system transcending both. As long as at least a significant minority continues to adhere to that system—either in its pre-Enlightenment or in a modernized form—Judaism will continue to survive and renew itself.

ROMAN A. FOXBRUNNER
Center for Jewish Studies
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ruth R. Wisse's quixotic notion that Jewish identity in the United States is doomed to disappear unless American Jews learn Hebrew is best left to religious Jews to debate.

As a member of a subset of Jewish culture—ethnic secular Jews—I have a different concern. Mrs. Wisse is properly critical of the content of what is taught to Jewish children in Hebrew school. She dismisses as presumptuous and mistaken the efforts by teachers in these schools to separate Jews and Gentiles on the ground that Jews are more sensitive and kind and more concerned about human and animal welfare. . . .

And yet she perpetuates the most divisive claim of all, that Jews are the chosen people of God. This belief more than any other drove me as a youngster out of religious school and into secularism. It seemed to me then, as it does now, arrogant and elitist. It invites, almost demands, an anti-Semitic response like William Norman Ewer's "How odd of God to choose the Jews." If the survival of American Jewry depends on allegiance to such a belief, there is no hope. Fortunately, I believe a great majority of American Jews reject in their hearts this singular and unjustifiable horror.

ALLEN TAYLOR
Chevy Chase, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ruth R. Wisse's eloquent plea for Hebrew education fills me with guilt at having allowed my minimal Hebrew to deteriorate to near uselessness. Considering that her fine article has this effect on a Catholic, I can only assume that it will have its intended result of reinvigorating Jewish commitment to Hebrew. I would like to add a few comments on the association of the Statue of Liberty with the Hellenistic Colossus of Rhodes, an issue which Mrs. Wisse passes over very quickly and which I feel may add some useful insights to her discussion of the iconography of "Liberty Enlightening the World."

Auguste Bartholdi, the designer

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of the Statue of Liberty, had in mind the colossal bronze representation of Helios, the Greek personification of the sun, which stood at the entrance to the harbor of Hellenistic Rhodes (certainly not straddling the harbor entrance as Emma Lazarus assumed, but standing on an enormous pedestal). Liberty's headgear is the radiate crown of the ancient solar divinity and represents Bartholdi's adaptation of the Hellenic concept of the sun's role in the solar cult and in Hellenistic ruler worship. . . .

Before obtaining the commission for the Statue of Liberty, Bartholdi had attempted to sell to the pasha of Egypt a design for a similar monument called "Commerce Enlightening the East," which would have stood at the Mediterranean entrance of the Suez Canal. Our female Colossus (liberty is a feminine word in both Greek and Latin) owes a large part of her identity to this colorful tradition. Mrs. Wisse is quite right about Liberty's associations with the supposed role of enlightenment in the French Revolution, and about the parallel drawn between the Tablets of the Law and the Declaration of Independence. I had not previously encountered her interesting references to the evocation of Moses' rays and Jesus' crown of thorns and would be very grateful for direction to sources for this idea.

PAUL F. BURKE, JR.
Clark University
Worcester, Massachusetts

RUTH R. WISSE writes:

My article appears to have had the effect of a Rorschach test, eliciting from each according to his anxieties. I don't know whether knowledge of Hebrew can alleviate Bernard Adelman's concern for Jewish consciousness or Rachel Ebner's for a diminished sense of holiness, but I fail to see why it should cause concern.

The letters of Roman A. Foxbrunner and Allen Taylor are complementary. Mr. Foxbrunner is afraid that my argument for Hebrew threatens the supremacy of Halakhah. Though I did not even mention, much less discuss, the historical or the halakhic status of Hebrew—only the need for Hebrew in America—he summons up the authority of the classical tradition to prove its unimportance. Because he is prepared to circle the wagons around "a significant minority" of Jews that continues to adhere to the Jewish law, he does not see the need to address any changes in the modern Jewish polity, neither the rise of the state of Israel nor the altered condition of Diaspora Jewry in the 20th century. As it happens, if history is to be invoked, Jews almost always and everywhere developed their own languages as an expression of their distinctive way of life. For many reasons, only some of which I discussed, Hebrew is the most effective expression of Jewish religious and national life today.

Allen Taylor is reciprocally dismissive of the "religious Jews." He thinks it is elitist to assume the discipline of Jewish law in the hopes of winning the approval of God. But as I have argued elsewhere, secular Judaism, not religious Judaism, is at least potentially racist. Anyone, after all, can elect to become a member of the "chosen" people by accepting the "yoke of the commandments," but no one can be a secular Jew except through birth. Thus, to the degree that classical Jewish education sets out to produce people who are "more sensitive and kind," it offers the same possibilities to anyone prepared to grasp the Torah. Secular Judaism, by contrast, lacks a moral basis for making any such claim.

My article attempted to locate in Hebrew the feature of modern Jewish national and religious life that is common and necessary to all Jews. To judge by some of my correspondents, I obviously underestimated the sectarian impulse that seeks out the divisive rather than the inclusive.

Thanks to Paul F. Burke, Jr. for his comments. Of several books on the Statue of Liberty, the most interesting to me was that of Marvin Trachtenberg, whose analysis of the iconography went far beyond my few observations.

The Talmud in English

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward Alexander's article, "A Talmud for Americans" [July], omitted mention of another remarkable publishing event related to the one he discusses.

Some months ago ArtScroll/Mesorah Press initiated a momentous undertaking paralleling that of the Steinsaltz English Talmud—the publication of a new English translation/commentary of the entire Babylonian Talmud. The first volume of this interpretive translation—Tractate Makkos—came out in a printing of 25,000 copies at the beginning of March. To everyone's surprise it was completely sold out within two weeks of its appearance and a second edition is presently on press. This is unprecedented in American Jewish publishing.

The approach of this interpretive annotated edition is to teach the Talmud text as though it were a rabbi's discourse intended to be listened to. The new edition, which is predicated on the assumption that the participant has had a previous encounter with Talmud study, has the translated page facing the original Talmud page (of the classic Vilna edition). If the English translation requires, let us say, four pages to one page of the original, then the original is reprinted four times with a special tinted marker indicating to the reader the particular segment translated on that page. The translation also provides scholarly notes and insights gleaned from the great classical commentators. Unfamiliar ideas are elucidated in a special section without interrupting the flow of the text.

Presently under preparation are Tractates Eruvin, Beitza, Mo'ad Katan, and Yevomos. The speedy sellout of the first volume is another indicator of the enthusiasm with which the traditional community is returning to the classic preoccupation of the Jewish people—the study of Torah.

[RABBI] PINCHAS STOLPER
Union of Orthodox Jewish
Congregations of America
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was fascinated by Edward Alexander's article, "A Talmud for Americans." It lifted an embarrassing veil from my eyes, since I remain an *"am-ha'aretz,"* religiously untutored. Some French friends, old and young, were also enthusiastic, and grateful. . . .

LÉON POLIAKOV
Massy, France

Affirmative Action

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his reply in the July issue to my letter commenting on his article, "'Affirmative Action': A Worldwide Disaster" [December 1989], Thomas Sowell begins with a misleading definition. American affirmative action has been con-

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ceived, developed, and implemented, not in terms of group rights but as an extension of the civil rights of individuals. Accordingly, in my doctoral thesis (Harvard University, 1989) and in my forthcoming book (Oxford University Press), based on an intercountry study of preferential policies, I have defined the objective of affirmative action as "minimizing the handicaps suffered on account of ethnicity and gender." This definition clearly excludes all sexism and racism. In contrast, Mr. Sowell's definition of affirmative action as "government apportionment of coveted positions to supersede the competition of the marketplace or of academia" covers virtually every variety of sexism and racism, including apartheid, and contradicts affirmative action as set out in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1984, in various American Supreme Court rulings, and in most of the scholarly literature on the subject.

In a racist society, "the competition of the marketplace" will reflect and sustain racism, as demonstrated, from different perspectives, by Kenneth Arrow, Edna Bonacich, William Darity, Walter Williams, Stanley Lieberson, T. C. Schelling, and Alan Wertheimer. In many societies it is neither laws nor explicit government policies that uphold racism but the market in the context of the prejudice of some and the informed self-interest of others who interact in it. Does Mr. Sowell dispute this?

Mr. Sowell has failed to meet any of my arguments. What he has attempted to do is to attack his own misperceptions of some of them. Let me go point by point.

1. I have clearly stated that statistical parity may be neither feasible nor equitable and that it is *gross* intergroup imbalances which might suggest the probability of significant group-based disabilities and the possibility of discrimination. Does Mr. Sowell disagree?

2. While I have not expressed an opinion on the principle of reparation, I have pointed out that the case for affirmative action does not rest on it. Is Mr. Sowell against all reparation, or only reparation to blacks?

3. I have stated that major interethnic imbalances in one generation may lead to significant inequality in life chances in the next generation as shown by James F. Fishkin, Glenn Loury, and many others. In consequence, even if there was initially no hostility or prejudice, it would be rational to use ethnicity as a screening device, and these circumstances may lead to prejudice and discrimination. Does Mr. Sowell disagree?

4. If there is one theme that emerges from Mr. Sowell's article (and from his other publications on the subject), it is his assertion that the primary cause of the poor performance of American blacks is not discrimination or any other exogenous factor but their own inadequacy. Does Mr. Sowell dispute this?

Since affirmative action is based on individual rights, the "handicaps suffered on account of ethnicity" sought to be overcome would exclude those caused by cultural traits internal to the individual but would include environmental handicaps on account of cultural traits external to the individual but internal to the ethnic group of which that individual is a member. Does Mr. Sowell oppose such affirmative action?

5. The ill-effects of programs to preserve racial hierarchies strengthen rather than weaken the case for programs to undermine racial hierarchies. Mr. Sowell's confusion arises from his failure to distinguish between diametrically opposite policies caught up within his curious definition of affirmative action.

6. Substantial improvements in the socioeconomic status of U.S. blacks since the mid-50's as well as affirmative-action programs are clearly linked to the activities of the civil-rights movement which peaked in the 60's. There are other explanations for the improvements in the socioeconomic status of blacks in the period before *Brown* (1954).

7. Mr. Sowell's contention that racial incidents are most prevalent in liberal and radical institutions is in keeping with the findings of many social scientists that disturbing ethnicity-based hierarchies and reducing interethnic disparity (which some of these institutions attempt to do) create friction. This phenomenon is not peculiar to the U.S., but is common to the experience of many countries. For example, D.I. Sheth, a distinguished Indian social scientist, has demonstrated that it is significant disturbance of the status quo through improvement in the rate of utilization of reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra and Gujarat that has led to elite resentment and agitation against affirmative action in those states, and that the intensity of protests is positively correlated to success in implementation. Mr. Sheth concludes:

> Any honest and effective measure to implement a transformative social policy—be it the removal of untouchability, land reforms, or reservations—is bound to generate conflicts. . . . There is abundant empirical evidence to show that wherever Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have improved their socioeconomic position by availing [themselves of] benefits from special schemes, they have become targets of atrocities.

Racially motivated incidents involving blacks are, in any case, less likely in institutions which are virtually segregated, or in which the proportion of blacks is minimal and stagnant or declining—as in the case of most colleges and universities which are not "liberal and radical." The surest way to avoid incidents involving an ethnic group in an institution is to exclude these groups from that institution. Is this what Mr. Sowell advocates?

8. The character of the reaction to the mobility of an ethnic group is determined by the nature of the prejudice against it. It is the emancipation of those groups against which there is deep-seated prejudice that provokes the most hostile reaction. That the modest mobility of blacks in the U.S. and of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India should encounter greater opposition than the more substantial mobility of certain other ethnic minorities should surprise no one. The resentment is not confined to improvement on account of affirmative action, but may extend to every advancement of the oppressed groups. Those familiar with the history of oppressed groups such as blacks in the U.S. and Harijans and Tribals in India are aware that the suppression of their mobility was most severe long before the advent of affirmative action.

9. Mr. Sowell has, clearly, no understanding of the issues involved in the conflict in Sri Lanka. For those interested in the subject, there are excellent studies by several scholars, including S. J. Tambiah.

Any dispassionate scholar can discover some of the body of hard

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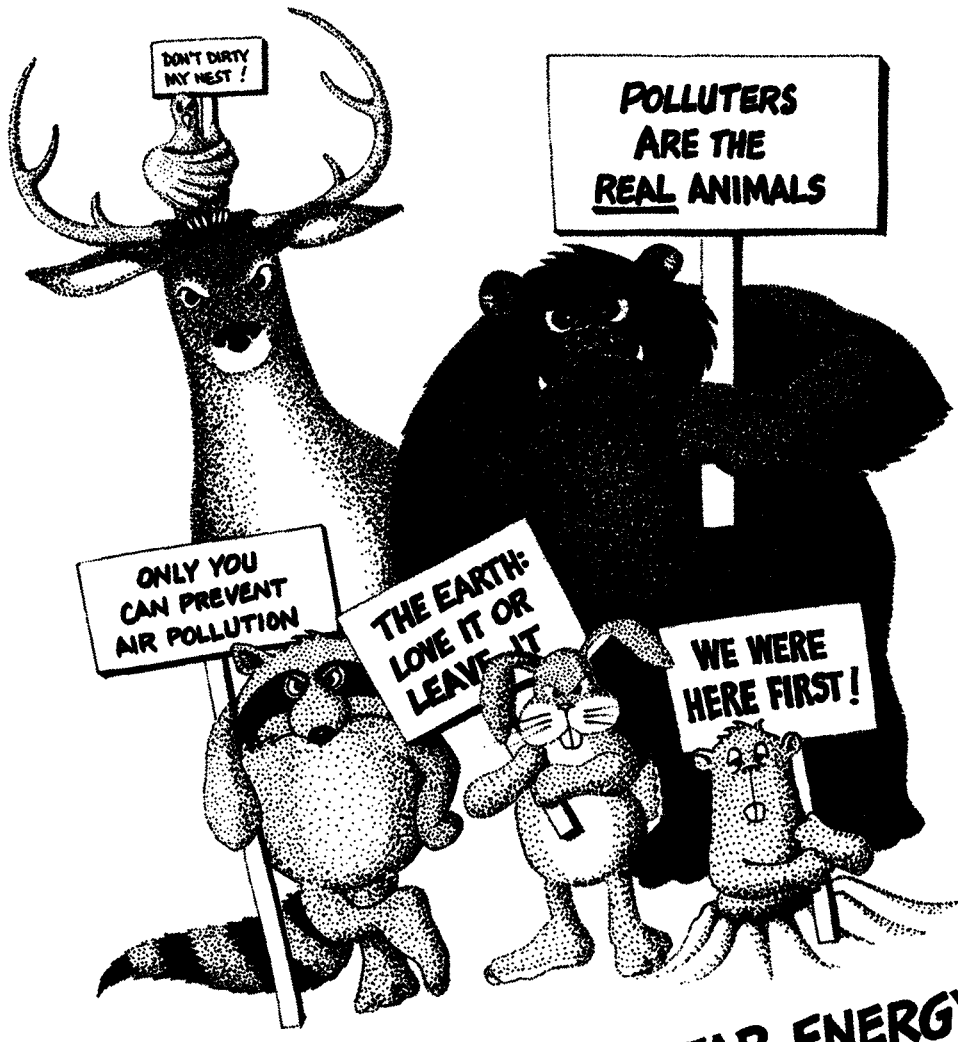
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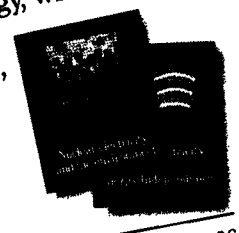

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evidence available, some more favorable and some less favorable to affirmative action, and excellent analyses of such evidence in the works of many scholars (e.g., Marc Galanter, J. Leonard, Myron Weiner, and William J. Wilson). All that is evident in Mr. Sowell's article and reply is his passionate hostility to affirmative action.

DEVANESAN NESIAH
Colombo, Sri Lanka

THOMAS SOWELL writes:

If Devanesan Nesiah had any real arguments, then it might be worthwhile to have yet another round of debate with him. But sweeping assertions, arbitrary definitions, or a list of people whose studies (with specifics omitted) supposedly support his conclusion are simply not serious arguments.

Ukrainians, Jews, Russians

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have just read David G. Roskies's "'There Go Our Little Jews'" [April] and the letters that followed it [Letters from Readers, July and August]. I would like to comment on some of the points Mr. Roskies raises in his interesting and spirited report on his two-week visit to Kiev, where he led a seminar for the training of Yiddish teachers. . . .

The creation of an Osher Shvartsman Library for Jewish books in Kiev is a healthy step forward and deserves help, but I wonder how many Kievites, let alone foreigners, are aware of the sizable collection of Soviet Yiddish books, bibliographies, etc., going back to the 20's, that are also available in the Kiev Shevchenko University library. Even fewer, I suspect, have tried to use the invaluable files contained in the archives of the library of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences of Yiddish newspapers published in the Ukraine almost to the moment of Nazi occupation. The collection even includes some from the then-thriving Jewish national districts in the southeast. . . .

The *new* memorial plaque to Sholem Aleichem is not on Saksanovskaya Street, as Mr. Roskies writes, but on Saksaganskogo Street. There is a much older one, too (though it called him a "famous writer" and not a "famous *Yiddish* writer"), on Krasnoarmeiskaya Street, almost in the center of Kiev. In 1987, I also saw the brand new Sholem Aleichem Boulevard in another part of the city. And, of course, the new Shvartsman Library now adds further to "official signs" of the Jewish presence in Kiev.

While the Babi Yar Memorial is not exactly "new," I am personally gratified to learn that a Yiddish plaque has finally been added to what in 1987 was still a single plaque in Ukrainian. . . . Since the Jewish massacre there lasted for *three* consecutive days in 1941, Mr. Roskies's mention of the "more than 30,000 Jews [who] were machine-gunned . . . on a single day" cannot but stir up the morbid "numbers" question all over again. And why the reluctance to acknowledge that others also shared in the carnage pit that was Babi Yar? The horror of Kiev's champion soccer team being marched directly from the stadium to Babi Yar is not just propaganda. . . .

The transcription of words of Hebrew origin into phonetic Yiddish was not some diabolical Soviet trick, as Mr. Roskies seems to imply. During the Yiddish "golden age" of the 20's, similar attempts were also made in other parts of the world. And linguistically, whatever the orthography, all real speakers of Yiddish understand such Yiddishized Hebraisms as *yomtev, khaverim, mazltov, l'khaim, maskim, oilem*—to cite just a few. After all, were Mr. Roskies and his colleague Peysakh Fiszman teaching Yiddish or Hebrew? . . .

The tendency of Soviet Jews (and I daresay, of Soviet people in general) not to pay attention to what is published and available in their own country is an old phenomenon, but they did not have to wait for the poet Abraham Sutzkever to learn the full story of the Holocaust (incidentally, during the war, he *was* published in Moscow). Numerous Soviet Yiddish works on this topic have been published all along—and some have enjoyed Russian and Ukrainian success as well. I. Falikman's 1962 novel about the Warsaw saga, *The Sun Is From the East*, for example, sold well in Russian translation; . . . then there was also Ilya Ehrenburg's and Vasily Grossman's searing reportage in Russian about the ghettos and camps.

In referring to the "faceless shock troops of the *Yevsektsia*," Mr. Roskies bandies about a term that had vanished by the early 30's. The Soviet Jewish tragedy, however, is all the more paradoxical in that Yiddish culture was always led (misled?) by most of the Soviet Yiddish intelligentsia—including Solomon Mikhoels, Itzik Feffer, etc.

Mr. Roskies's denigration of Birobidzhan is also unseemly, though I can well believe it was a Kievite who described Birobidzhan as "A couple of *goyim* speaking bad Yiddish." I should think Yiddish in the USSR has enough *tsores* without casting aspersions on this or that center, particularly a city that on June 3 of this year posted its new logo all over public buildings and the railway station: a blue-and-white banner showing a huge menorah with the Yiddish word for peace, "*sholem*," on top, and the Russian equivalent ("*mir*") at the bottom. In fact, there was a delegation from Birobidzhan of serious would-be teachers of Yiddish at the Yiddish teachers' seminar in Moscow, one of whom was studying . . . at the Kiev Teachers' College of Foreign Languages during Mr. Roskies's visit.

As is often the case, Mr. Roskies mistakenly locates Birobidzhan in "eastern Siberia." Actually, it is in the Amur Basin of the Soviet Far East, just two hours' train ride from Khabarovsk. The latter, a metropolis of 800,000, is now considered a "Pacific rim" city—along with its sister-city Portland, Oregon. (Birobidzhan itself has just become a sister-city of Beaverton, a suburb of Portland.) Siberia proper is well to the north and west of the Jewish Autonomous Region.

As for the alphabet question, the 1988 *Alefbeis* [alphabet] published in Khabarovsk for Birobidzhan's Yiddish classes carries an excellent chart with all the final letters included. And Mr. Roskies's description of the valiant plans now under way for a "new alphabet chart with all 22 letters of the alphabet and new graded readers with real Jewish content" seems to ignore Sandler's best-selling *Yiddish Self-Study*, published in 1989, and already in its second printing—complete with all the possible letters to be found in Yiddish. Nor does Mr. Roskies show any awareness of the quantities of "real Jewish content" from all over the world in the new journal for beginners, *Yungvald*, replete with Western-style Hebraisms *in Hebrew*. Its parent journal, *Sovetish Heimland*, has been carrying installments of Dubnow's *History of the Jews*, along with biblical tales, in modified orthography which includes final letters.

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(The last outpost of "purist" Soviet Yiddish orthography is the *Birobidzhaner shtern*. . . .)

As for the university English teachers in Kiev, supposedly starved for contact with Americans, that city happens to have an unusually high number of English teachers visiting on the annual IREX exchange program every summer. And both IREX and Fulbright scholars are regularly to be found on Kiev University's campus—for varying lengths of time. (I myself was the first IREX graduate scholar there in 1962.)

I am not versed in the enrollment figures for "extension" courses in Hebrew or other languages, but in the full-time academic system, English is overwhelmingly *the* foreign language at all levels, throughout the USSR.

Of one thing I am certain: if present trends continue, the Jewish zest for (1) English and (2) Hebrew will grow in preparation for the future, particularly if Kiev Jews encounter more such remarks like "There go our little Jews"—hardly an "affectionate" expression in English, let alone if the Russian term "*evreichiki*" was used!

BERNARD CHOSEED
Professor Emeritus
Georgetown University
Gifu, Japan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ukrainian dissidents, whether Christians, nonbelievers, or Jews have worked together for many decades on human-rights issues. But this is evidently a sideshow in the view of COMMENTARY, which has recently published some of the meanest, most historically simplistic, indeed libelous, words ever used to characterize an entire people, the Ukrainians, an ethnic group (of those who are left) of over 50,000,000 worldwide. I refer to the article by David G. Roskies.

Mr. Roskies's contribution to reconciliation is the following grenade, lobbed no doubt from the fragile shelter of a greenhouse: "There has not been nor will there ever be a moral reckoning for the Jewish blood spilled by Ukrainian hands." And that is as friendly as he gets, since elsewhere he tosses Ivan the Terrible (*sic*) into his poisonous stew of Ukrainian hetmen, evil peasants, and Nazi-lovers. . . .

I have agonized over writing this letter. My wife and her family, refugees from Lvov, . . . urged me not to write but they are truly Christian and actually pray for reconciliation between Christians and Jews. Mr. Roskies has almost convinced me that no such coming together as human beings is possible. Perhaps he is right that "there will never be a moral reckoning" for what I will paraphrase as "Ukrainian blood spilled by Jewish hands." Allow me my own list of culpable or at least complicit Jews without further historical explanation, just as Mr. Roskies made his list. Will he grant me the historical facts that there were evil overseers in the 17th century, that Marx, Engels, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Kaganovich, Ehrenburg, Litvinov, Walter Duranty's employers, *et al.* did actually exist and had a lethally adverse effect on the Ukrainian people?

Ukrainians as well as Jews will bleed when cut.

MICHAEL W. CUNNINGHAM
Darien, Connecticut

DAVID G. ROSKIES writes:

By now, the exchange of letters surrounding my "spirited report" has turned sinister. These last bear witness to old habits of the mind and perversions of the heart that fester and grow even outside the Ukrainian heartland. Michael W. Cunningham reminds us that Ukrainians have a score to settle with their "little Jews" going all the way back to the 17th century. In their name he is keeping a careful tally of every Jew, half-Jew, and Jew-by-association who ever "collaborated" with the Polish, Great Russian, or Bolshevik enemy. In Mr. Cunningham's balance sheet of moral turpitude, Marx (of Jewish ancestry but baptized), Engels (who was not Jewish at all), and the rest of that revolutionary cohort are as culpable as the butcher of the Treblinka death camp nicknamed Ivan the Terrible who now awaits sentencing in Israel. I pity the liberal intellectuals of the Ukrainian Rukh movement whose bid for national reconciliation will find precious little support from at least some in the émigré community, let alone at home.

Sustaining the legacy of lies are the Old Guard apologists like Bernard Choseed who still labor to prop up the Potemkin village of Birobidzhan, who parade the latest exemplars of Yiddish Communist culture like Sandler's "best-selling *Yiddish Self-Study*" that managed to survive the *Yevsektsia*, the purges, the Khrushchev thaw, the period of stagnation, and now, *glasnost*. But the undeniable signs of a Jewish cultural revival seem to have escaped Mr. Choseed's eyes, trained since 1962 to look only where bidden. The liveliest samples of Yiddish journalism I brought back from my trip were three issues of the Moscow-based *Mame-loshn* (Mother Tongue). Each typewritten issue of this *samizdat* bulletin not only adopted the so-called YIVO orthography but also carried a special "anti-Dehebraization" column designed to reacquaint Soviet Jews with the correct spelling and meaning of Hebraisms in Yiddish. *Mame-loshn* was typed in the offices of *Sovetish Heimland* after hours by its defiant young editor, the poet Velvl Chernin. When Chernin left, to pursue graduate Yiddish studies at Tel Aviv's Bar-Ilan University, his bulletin folded.

I also returned with a collection of pins—a favorite form of Soviet popular culture. The official display set of pins celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidzhan (1934-84) was executed in Russian. The self-issued pins of the Jewish Cultural Society of Lithuania, of Tekumah, of the Conference of Soviet Jewish Organizations and Communities, all carried Hebrew inscriptions. The medium is their message.

The "sizable collections" of Yiddish books and archival materials scattered about Kiev and elsewhere are so inaccessible that the Moscow State Historical and Archival Institute has just entered into a five-year agreement with the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and the YIVO Institute for the training of archivists and the preparation of a guide to Jewish archival collections in the USSR. It will prove to be a gargantuan and costly effort. Soviet Jews can indeed enjoy easy access to "the full story of the Holocaust," provided that they move to Israel where, in 1980, Ilya Ehrenburg's and Vasily Grossman's "searing reportage in Russian about the ghettos and camps" (the famous *Black Book*) was finally published from a smuggled copy of the confiscated manuscript.

Years from now, when students of 20th-century history will want to know what prompted the mass migration of Jews from the former Soviet empire, they would do well to begin with these two letters.

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A Statement on the Persian Gulf Crisis

On September 11, just after returning to Washington from his one-day summit meeting in Helsinki with Mikhail Gorbachev, George Bush addressed a joint session of Congress. While most of his speech was devoted to the crisis in the Persian Gulf, Bush said nothing that he had not already said many times before in the weeks since Iraq under Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait and he had then responded by sending American forces to Saudi Arabia. Yet the President's rhetoric on this occasion was generally interpreted as a subtle effort to prepare American public opinion for the actual use of those forces in combat—for, as one commentator put it, bloodshed in the Persian Gulf.

I must confess that, watching him deliver the speech on television, I had not interpreted it that way. Perhaps the subtle effort he was supposedly making was a little too subtle. Or it may be that I was overly influenced by all the other signals which had by then been pouring forth in a steady stream from the White House and the State Department to the effect that our strategy for driving Iraq out of Kuwait rested entirely on a tightening of the economic embargo already in place and an intensification of diplomatic pressures on Saddam Hussein.

To be sure, these statements had always carefully left room for "additional steps," and so did the joint communiqué issued in condemnation of the Iraqi aggression by Bush and Gorbachev at the conclusion of their Helsinki meeting. But then again, Gorbachev had instantly and heatedly denied that the language in question was meant to endorse the use of military force, and Bush had not contradicted him. Nor had he contradicted his National Security Adviser, Brent Scowcroft, or his Secretary of State, James A. Baker 3d, when they too had in various interviews distanced themselves—though not so emphatically as Gorbachev—from the idea of the military option.

Then, only two weeks later, the Soviets suddenly changed their position. Speaking at the United Nations on September 25, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard A. Shevardnadze warned Iraq that his country was now prepared to go along with multilateral military action "if the illegal occupation of Kuwait continues." For this he was praised by Baker and other Western diplomats. At the same time, they all emphasized that their support for military force was contingent upon its being implemented through the UN, thereby probably precluding any speedy resort to such action and certainly ruling out any unilateral American moves.

This issue of whether our troops and planes and ships were in the Persian Gulf to fight a war, or only to prevent (or deter) one, had by then become the only factor threatening to disrupt the amazingly happy harmony which surrounded Bush's actions both at home and abroad. Almost everyone in the world, with the exception of a few Arab states and the PLO, had endorsed the stated goals of Bush's policy—to make Saddam withdraw from Kuwait and to bring back the government he had driven out of that country. More surprisingly, almost everyone in the world had also endorsed the dispatching of American military forces to the region to discourage any move Saddam might be contemplating against Saudi Arabia—a move that, if successful, would leave him with an intolerable degree of control over the

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oil on which so many nations depend. Here at home as well, support for Bush both on goals and tactics had been overwhelming from the very first.

Overwhelming—but not exactly universal. In the "old" days—that is, up until the Iraqi invasion itself—one could safely have bet the ranch that any such action by the United States as Bush took in response to that invasion would immediately trigger vigorous opposition from the Left. Yet apart from a few pathetic demonstrations demanding that we get out of Saudi Arabia, a lonely op-ed piece in the New York *Times* by a father warning that he would never forgive Bush if his son were to be killed in a war with Iraq, and a soft drumbeat of complaint that American boys were being sent to Saudi Arabia only "to make the world safe for gas guzzlers," there was nothing. Instead, to the amazement of many and the delight of some, the role we had all become so accustomed to seeing played by the Left was now usurped by certain figures on the Right.

The most visible of these was Patrick J. Buchanan. In a series of syndicated newspaper columns and in frequent appearances on television, Buchanan took the formidable polemical artillery he had always aimed at the Left and turned it on those of his erstwhile political allies within the conservative community who had been advocating air strikes that would cripple Iraq's chemical-warfare capability and retard its development of a nuclear capability as well. He identified this group as the "neoconservatives," a term he was clearly using as a euphemism for "Jews"*; and in case anyone should fail to get the point, he explicitly went on to charge that the only people trying to drag us into a war with Iraq were Israel and its "amen corner" in the United States. He did not bother to explain how this brutal allegation jibed with the fact that *National Review* here and the *Economist* in London, two magazines which could in no sense be characterized as neoconservative (let alone as Jewish) and which are not exactly notable for saying amen to everything Israel does, were among the most vigorous proponents of the need for quick military action against Iraq. Not that this fact, or any others, could put a dent in the impenetrable armor of Buchanan's by now openly virulent hostility to Israel and his thus far more covert animus against Jews in general.

The columnist team of Evans and Novak also blamed Israel and its American supporters for trying to drag this country into a war which, they warned, would result in tens of thousands of body bags being shipped back to America from Saudi Arabia. Even worse, as it seemed, from their point of view, bombing Iraq would also turn the entire Arab world against us. Yet as they themselves soon went on to report (though without so much as a single indication that they were contradicting most of what they had previously been telling us), most of our Arab allies in this conflict, far from counseling restraint, were urging the United States to strike Iraq quickly and hard.

TRUE, that was also what the Israelis wanted. After all, Saddam had only just threatened to hit Israel with everything in his arsenal, including the poison gas he had already used against Kurds and Iranians; and if Israel had not destroyed the Iraqi reactor in 1981 (an act which had earned it universal condemnation), that arsenal might well by now have also been stocked with nuclear weapons. Now the Israelis feared that if this latest crisis should end with Iraq's military infrastructure in place, it would not be long before Tel Aviv and Jerusalem would be under the gun of missiles effectively fitted with chemical and, eventually, nuclear warheads.

* Buchanan is not alone in suggesting that the two are interchangeable. But tiresome though it is to keep repeating the point, the fact remains that a goodly number of the most prominent neoconservatives are not Jewish (Jeane Kirkpatrick, William J. Bennett, Michael Novak, James Q. Wilson, Richard John Neuhaus, and Peter Berger are a few who come immediately to mind). Nor, as the names of Henry Kissinger and William Safire prove, are all Jewish conservatives neo (that is, converts to conservatism from a formerly liberal or radical position).

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Still, while the Israelis naturally wanted the United States to remove this threat, no one in the Israeli government—apart from the irrepressible Ariel Sharon—was saying so out loud. It was widely believed that this uncharacteristic reticence had been adopted at the request of the Bush administration, precisely in order to head off the charge being pushed by Saddam, and echoed by the likes of Buchanan and Evans and Novak, that the United States was acting not in its own interests but in the interests of Israel; or, in the succinct formulation of a radical Arab opponent of American intervention, "the U.S. is here to destroy Iraq for the sake of Israel." Obviously, if the hope of heading off that charge was indeed why the Israelis had been keeping so low a profile, they might just as well have saved themselves the trouble.

Joining the anti-Israel neoisolationists of the Right in a bizarre coalition were a number of liberal commentators who also expressed alarm over the position taken by the people the New York *Times* called "hasty hawks" (more or less the same group that Buchanan was calling the neoconservatives). In contrast to Buchanan, however, the *Times* neither suggested that these people were all Jews working for Israel nor opposed Bush's stated goals of deterring an Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia and annulling the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait. On the contrary, the *Times* even went so far as to advocate that our objectives be extended to the elimination of Iraq's ability to wage chemical or nuclear war—but not by bombing those facilities. How then were we to do this? By economic and political pressure, said the *Times*. Yet the notion that anything short of air strikes against Iraq's military infrastructure could do the job in question was so wildly implausible that one could only see in it an example of willing the end without willing the means.

IT WAS at this point that a certain resemblance to the debate over Vietnam began to manifest itself.

Contrary to a popular myth (which has apparently also taken root in the Pentagon), there was virtually no opposition at first to the policy of saving South Vietnam from Communism and for the dispatch of American troops by John F. Kennedy, and then by Lyndon Johnson, to that country—no more, and perhaps even less, than there was to the dispatch of our troops by George Bush to Saudi Arabia. Thus, there were no moves in Congress to prevent American intervention in Vietnam in 1962-63, and the Gulf of Tonkin resolution—the closest we ever came to a declaration of war—passed by an overwhelming margin in 1964. Even as late as 1966, an amendment to repeal that resolution was defeated in the Senate by a vote of 92-5.

It was the same with the media. In April 1965, in an editorial that could just as easily have appeared in the Washington *Post* or in the two major newsmagazines, the New York *Times* declared that "Virtually all Americans understand that we must stay in South Vietnam at least for the near future." And indeed, the public-opinion polls were then solidly behind Johnson, just as they now were behind Bush.

On the other hand, then as now, the New York *Times*, like a growing number of liberal doves in other parts of the political forest, was up to its inveterate trick of willing the end but not the means. Shortly after we had begun bombing the North, for example, a *Times* editorial declared:

> The Americans went into Vietnam . . . to contain the advance of Communism in that part of Southeast Asia. The motives are exemplary and every American can be proud of them, but the crucial questions are: Can it be done? Is the price too high? . . . Is the United States losing more than it is gaining?

Then as now, too, the administration in power reacted to such qualms by struggling to achieve its objectives on the cheap. In the case of Johnson, this meant fighting a war without, as he himself once proudly put it, trying to

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generate a war fever in the country (which, he feared, would jeopardize his domestic programs). It also meant persuading himself that he could save South Vietnam through a negotiated settlement (even though, as might have been suspected then, and as we now know for certain from Hanoi itself, there never was any such chance).

In the case of Bush (at least up until the beginning of October) the analogous illusion, also helped along by the dovish sentiment building up around him, seemed to be that he could win a war without actually fighting one—that he could drive Saddam out of Kuwait through tightening the economic noose and increasing Iraq's diplomatic isolation. Yet even in the unlikely event that this turned out to be possible, there would still be the problem of how to deal with Saddam's military machine. For if the Iraqi tyrant, or for that matter some thuggish successor who might overthrow him, were to withdraw from Kuwait while being permitted to hold onto his missiles and his chemical weapons and his nascent nuclear capability, the threat Iraq poses to our vital interests in the region would remain.

And so, of course, would the mortal threat to Israel. In mentioning this, I realize that—being both a neoconservative and a Jew—I risk providing evidence for the pernicious charges which have been made by Buchanan and his ilk. But refusing to mention it would be to capitulate to the same kind of intimidation, emanating in the 1930's from Buchanan's political ancestors on the isolationist Right, that led American Jews to be cautious about advocating American entry into the war against Hitler. Surely it is much too late in the historical day for Jews to bow to such despicable pressures.

Why in any case should they? The war against Saddam is no more a "Jewish war" than was the war against Hitler. It is a war to prevent control of a vital resource from falling into the hands of a ruthless aggressor. It is a war to discourage others from engaging in such aggression. It is a war to establish a more peaceful order in the post-cold-war world. Conversely, just as the threat Hitler posed to European Jewry ought to have been an additional reason for decent people to stop him rather than something to be kept quiet and to be embarrassed about, so too with the threat Saddam poses to Israel.

As of early October, elimination of the Iraqi threat, which is no less fervently desired by enemies of Israel like Saudi Arabia and Syria than it is by Israel itself, has yet to become a declared purpose of American policy. In fact, signals are now being sent both by Saddam and by Bush that a diplomatic settlement (which is also being pushed by the French) may after all be in the works. This would inevitably entail economic and political concessions to Iraq in exchange for the promise of a phased withdrawal from Kuwait, and would therefore constitute, and be perceived throughout the Middle East as, a victory for Saddam, no matter how loudly it might be declared the opposite by its dovish proponents in the West.

Yet it is also possible that these diplomatic signals will turn out to be nothing more than a feint. It is even possible that, by the time these words are published, with our forces fully deployed and with the weather conditions in the desert more propitious, George Bush will have begun using whatever degree and combination of military power may be necessary to neutralize the military power of Iraq. (For specifics, see Eliot A. Cohen's article below.) If, however, he should fail to take such action, then he will also fail to achieve even the more limited objectives he has so far set for himself, with incalculable damage to his presidency, to his country, and to the world.

—Norman Podhoretz

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How to Fight Iraq

Eliot A. Cohen

As I write in early October, war may well lie before us in the Persian Gulf. Even the most sanguine administration officials concede that Iraq can probably withstand an embargo for six or twelve months. It is also clear that the coalition of nations opposing Iraq will not allow that embargo to starve their enemy even if it looked likely to do so. Furthermore, with increasing asperity our Arab allies have argued that Saddam Hussein and his regime must be dispatched, and some European allies—the British most notably—appear to agree, however reluctantly. Something on the order of 170,000 American servicemen and women are now in the Persian Gulf or on the way there: others will follow. By mid- or late November at least two mechanized divisions, one air-assault division, and one Marine division will be in place, plus additional independent units. Hundreds of aircraft have deployed to air bases well stocked with ammunition and spare parts.

At the same time, Saddam's troops are systematically pillaging Kuwait and beginning the work of destroying it as a state. By obliterating official records and encouraging the flight of Kuwaitis and resident foreigners, Saddam is seeking to create facts—to make the resurrection of an independent nation impossible. Perhaps over a third of a million Iraqi troops are digging in, constructing an array of fortifications, supply dumps, and communications that will render the country a permanently fortified zone.

It is, of course, conceivable that either George Bush or Saddam Hussein will back down before war erupts, but each man has made it clear that his personal prestige and power rest on the outcome of this confrontation.

If, then, war comes, what might it look like? What kind of military power might we bring to bear in the Persian Gulf, and to what end?

Without detailed knowledge of operational conditions and deployments, both friendly and hostile, it is impossible to make a complete assessment of our options, much less to make sound recommendations. On the larger questions of war and peace, however, it is possible to sketch out the dimensions of the problems that we face, and the choices available to us. Understanding that in war, more than in most human affairs, "the devil is in the details," the commentator on strategy—and his readers—must treat all conclusions as tentative.

The problem is compounded by the uncertainty of the present situation, which is greater than that of many other military standoffs. The greatest philosopher of war, Carl von Clausewitz, has observed:

> The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish . . . the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.

In the present case it may be unusually difficult to judge correctly the nature of the war upon which we will embark. For one thing, it will be hard to assess correctly the solidity of the Iraqi state and the Iraqi armed forces. On the one hand, Iraq fought an eight-year-long war with Iran with remarkable consistency of purpose; on the other hand, the Baathist leadership of Iraq appears to have bought support with a program of material benefits impossible to sustain now that the Iraqi economy is under embargo. Saddam has created a Stalinist state, and such politics may, paradoxically, combine great strength with equally great fragility, as the example of the Soviet Union in June 1941 would suggest. Unlike Noriega's kleptocracy in Panama, however, this regime may have considerable staying power in adversity. And although Baathist ideology may have stifled initiative and professional expertise in the past, it is not necessarily true that Iraqi generals will be incompetents or amateurs. During the course of the Iran-Iraq war they, like the armies they commanded, improved in the art of war. As scholars of the Wehrmacht have reluctantly come to understand, ideological fanaticism is in no way incompatible with fighting spirit. And the sheer bulk and sophistication of Iraqi forces—whose

Eliot A. Cohen, professor of strategic studies at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins, is the co-author of *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (Free Press).

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crack units alone equal in number the American ground forces opposite them, and who have in their hands some of the best aircraft, long-range artillery, and tanks modern industry can produce—make them a difficult opponent.

If it comes to a clash of arms, very different kinds of forces will be opposed to one another. The Iraqis have a large and battle-experienced army; ours, and those of most of our allies, are considerably smaller, technologically more advanced, and not accustomed to large-scale warfare. Particularly if the United States and its allies undertake to drive the Iraqis from Kuwait on the ground—an operation that will become increasingly difficult as they dig themselves in—the asymmetry between the two forces will become an important imponderable.

The conduct and outcome of the first battles will be of particular importance. First impressions of an opponent have a lasting effect on the fighting power of one's own forces. The Yom Kippur war of 1973, for example, was probably made far more difficult for the Israelis by virtue of the purely psychological effects of the initial Arab surprise and successes. The Egyptians and Syrians continued to fight hard throughout the war, understanding that their enemies had been proven fallible mortals. If in the initial clashes with the Iraqis the American forces are roughly handled, the rest of the war will go that much harder; but if American prowess is clearly demonstrated in the first day or so, the second-rate Iraqi troops who have been put in the front lines may fight with less determination. Fighting ability, then, is not a constant to be measured with precision before the battle.

A further source of uncertainty stems from the possibility that this may be a "tightly coupled" war—a war in which second- and third-order consequences of its outbreak spread extremely rapidly. The Iran-Iraq war, by contrast, was "loosely coupled," in that it took years for the war to embroil other actors or to affect in a drastic way the domestic politics of the combatants and of other countries. Here, however, things may be different. The repercussions of such a war may be felt very fast in Iraq itself, on the Arab street in countries like Jordan, and in the United States.

Finally, such a war is made more uncertain by the American objectives in waging it. For Saddam the issue is clear: he must hold Kuwait or risk forfeiting his rule and his life. By giving away all of the gains from the war with Iran he has made some kind of success here imperative. And his task is simplified by the fact that he is on the strategic defensive—that is, he hopes to retain all or some of his gains. Our goals, conversely, are strategically offensive and hence more difficult to achieve. They are ambitious enough in themselves—securing an unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, restoring the Emirate, assuring the safety of all American citizens, and maintaining the security and stability of the gulf. The unstated objectives often bruited about in government circles—the destruction of Iraqi chemical and nuclear facilities, the permanent reduction of Iraqi military power, and the ejection of Saddam from power—are more ambitious yet. They are not necessarily harmonious with one another: the obliteration of Iraqi military power, for example, may breed new threats to Persian Gulf security from an Iran that has seen its traditional foe crushed without having to lift a finger.

Obviously, the United States cannot "lose" this war in the sense that Germany or Japan lost World War II. But it is entirely possible for us to lose in the sense that we lost in Vietnam—that is, we may fail to achieve our objectives and our enemies may succeed in achieving theirs. Saddam's strategic predicament requires that he make the war costly, long, and politically difficult, hoping for a compromise peace that will leave him some gains when peace is finally concluded.

The Instruments of Force

More important than any weapon deployed in the Persian Gulf is the character of the American armed forces. Because of the absence of the draft and the general lack of interest that the American middle class has in its armed forces, this world remains *terra incognita* to many Americans. Such ignorance is unfortunate from many points of view, and not least because it may pave the way for civil-military conflicts of a kind not seen since the Vietnam war. What follows is a brief sketch of the temperament of the officer corps, and particularly of those in the field grades and general-officer ranks who set the tone for all who serve under them. Their understanding of what war is and how it should be fought will shape the conflict and the mixture of force and diplomacy that will bring it to a close.

This is, first and foremost, an operationally self-confident military. Nearly a decade of high budgets have given it a large array of new hardware, and provided for ample training at remarkable new facilities like the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California. At that Mojave Desert outpost, which is larger than the state of Rhode Island, American mechanized and armored battalions wage simulated war against a numerically superior mock-Soviet force. With the aid of superb technical systems (including remote-control cameras, laser scoring systems, and automated firing ranges), units can simulate close combat about as well as can be done without engaging in a shooting war. The Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force have similar facilities, and, what is more important, they have dedicated noncommissioned officers and enlisted personnel who are in uniform because they want to be. Furthermore, the success-

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ful invasion of Panama, with its dazzling feats of logistical planning, the coordination of hundreds of aircraft flying at night in radio silence, and simultaneous attacks against multiple targets, bolstered military self-confidence. Indeed, the field commander in Panama, Lieutenant General Carl Stiner, is reported to have declared that "there are no [negative] lessons to be learned from 'Just Cause,'" as the operation was code-named.

The flip side of this pride and self-confidence is, potentially, arrogance. No peacetime maneuvers can substitute for combat experience, and American history is replete with the story of units discovering that the first battles they fought bore little resemblance to prewar exercises, no matter how elaborate. Invariably the stresses of war will reveal that some commanders who excel in garrison, or on exercises, will crack up in combat. Nor should it be assumed that American technology will always perform as advertised (for that matter, it cannot be assumed that it will not). The danger here lies less in the final outcome than in the creation of false expectations of complete and nearly effortless victory, an illusion that may be fostered unwittingly by a military that is justifiably proud of its professional skills.

The American military believes that war should be both swift and violent; that a quick win heads off doubt at home and the recuperation of the enemy in the theater. In part because of its reading of American popular impatience, the military wishes to win while the public backs the war effort, for above all it fears the consequences of a fractured home front. The Army, which has provided operation "Desert Shield" with its senior commander, firmly believes that wars can only be won on the ground, and this bit of folk wisdom is widely shared in the government. The Army too, however, would like a fast, smashing victory.

All this implies that the armed forces will be inclined to sit tight until they have enough men and machines on the ground to do the job thoroughly, and then to do the job fast. But these sensible wishes may cause problems because war sooner rather than later may be in our interest. Winston Churchill once observed:

> I have often tried to set down the strategic truths I have comprehended in the form of simple anecdotes, and they rank this way in my mind. One of them is the celebrated tale of the man who gave the powder to the bear. He mixed the powder with the greatest care, making sure that not only the ingredients but the proportions were absolutely correct. He rolled it up in a large paper spill, and was about to blow it down the bear's throat. But the bear blew first.

Saddam will not sit still waiting for us to choose the best moment to dispatch him. And the preference for the well-prepared blitzkrieg—in fact, the certainty that it is the only feasible strategy for impatient Americans—may produce bewilderment if it turns out not to work.

The preference for the quick blitz has other roots as well, among them a desire to avoid excessive political interference in the conduct of military operations. Convinced that civilian micro-management ruined us in Vietnam, and that a willingness to give wide discretion to the military in Panama made that operation a success, the officer corps fears close supervision by its political masters. Needless to say, it will submit to such controls, and it understands that war must serve the ends of policy. But the officer corps fears that sound military logic will go by the board if politicians begin to take too close an interest in the conduct of operations.

This reading of both Vietnam and Just Cause is at the very least grossly oversimplified. All great war leaders—Lincoln, Clemenceau, Churchill, Roosevelt, Ben-Gurion, to name but a few—"meddled," and their meddling stemmed not from ignorance of war but from an understanding of its political character and an awareness of the limits of professional expertise. The formulation of strategy is, invariably, a messy business, not subject to purely military reasoning or indeed to elaborate preplanning for more than the opening stages of conflict. Luckily, because of the personalities of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, and his civilian superiors, many disputes may be solved amicably. But the potential will exist for paralyzing discord if things do not go well.

Civilian command errors may compound the problem. The abrupt dismissal in September of General Michael Dugan, chief of staff of the Air Force, for discussing possible bombing targets in Iraq raises a question mark in this regard. Dugan was foolish to speak as he did, but he revealed no secrets. The decision to sack the able and intelligent leader of the main service that would be thrown into the front line may come back to haunt those who took it. Should the sacking of other prominent generals be required (and it often is), old patterns of civil-military mistrust may recur. A statesman once observed that it is better to have to rein in the eager stallion than spur the reluctant plow horse. The message sent by this firing will surely reverberate in the minds of other generals, and not necessarily for the good.

THIS is, finally, a military that will fight looking over its shoulder. The generous budgets, and more importantly the public approbation of the Reagan years, have healed the wounds inflicted by Vietnam, but the scars still ache and the tissue is tender. The armed forces fear that once again they will be made the scapegoat for foolish policy, and that once again the uniform their members wear with pride will become an object of derision or even loathing.

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Unlike their British counterparts of Kipling's day, American officers find unbearable the thought of a population "making mock of uniforms that guard you while you sleep." This concern will lead the military to search instinctively for popular strategies as well as quick ones. Yet, as has often been said, "war is an option of difficulties," and a time may come when the military will have to think more about the battle before it than about popular support.

None of this should be taken to suggest that the American military is either incompetent or pathologically unsuited for the tasks that lie before it. It is, rather, to suggest the lines along which civil-military unity may be strained or even come undone. To ensure that these tensions are minimized (they cannot be avoided) is the task of statecraft.

Which raises perhaps the most important question of all: what is the quality of American political leadership as it confronts the prospect of war? George Bush has two great virtues as a potential war President, and one glaring flaw. His first-hand experience of war may count for relatively little—Jefferson Davis, a hero of the Mexican-American War, was much worse as a war President than Abraham Lincoln, who had trivial experience as a militia officer. No, this President's strengths have more to do with innate character. First and foremost, Bush can make decisions, including the decision to go to war. Panama demonstrated that quality, and it is of cardinal importance in war. And unlike Jimmy Carter, he will not let his concern for hostages paralyze him. Secondly, Bush knows the importance of secrecy: as Churchill remarked during World War II, "in wartime truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." Democracies, which inspire contempt among dictators for their incessant parleying and squabbling, can exploit the surprise that resides in their capacity for swift decision if a leader wishes it.

Bush's great weakness is his tin ear for the greater issues of democratic politics—the poverty of his rhetoric, using that overworked term in its ancient and proper sense. His willingness to send his National Security Adviser to bandy words with the butchers of Tiananmen Square soon after they had slaughtered protesting students; his failure to find ringing words to celebrate the liberation of Eastern Europe; his hesitation thus far in describing Saddam's grisly cruelties in vivid terms—all bespeak an inability to portray the great themes of politics. Charming and gracious in personal encounters, he relies on the telephone and intimate conversation to conduct business, but these will not enable him to mobilize a nation for war. Fundamentally a moderate, he instinctively prefers the pastels of diplomacy to the bolder hues of grand policy. More sophisticated and probably more intelligent than his predecessor, he lacks Ronald Reagan's grasp of the politics of passion—and yet war is above all a matter of passion. Notably, Bush's one real stab at "vision" consisted of praise for "points of light," an array of details, not a comprehensive vista of the American present and future.

Bush may well rise to the challenge. Even if he does not, so long as the war goes reasonably well, this flaw will not prove crucial. Bush and his advisers are competent and energetic, and that may turn out to be enough. It is fortunate that the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the solid and politically savvy General Colin Powell, since the prominence assigned that post since the reorganization of the Department of Defense in 1986 makes it uniquely, indeed excessively, important. Congress has, thus far, supported the President generously. That too may change if the war goes poorly.

All this suggests, then, that the United States' seemingly overwhelming military advantages in a war with Iraq are not quite as invincible as they may seem. Leadership at the highest levels, and not merely the quality of our weapons and tactics, will decide the outcome of the war. If President Bush can explain to the American people the necessity of this war, and if he can make them and their military understand that it may not be short and almost assuredly will not be easy, he will have gone a long way toward securing victory.

America's Strategic Options

THERE are four operational patterns a war between Saddam Hussein and the American-led coalition might take. Conceivably, Saddam might lunge at Saudi Arabia, although it is hard to see why he would do that now, having failed to do it before substantial American forces were present on the ground. Saddam could perhaps be provoked to such action by intolerable pressure brought to bear through air power, but that would only play into our hands. For an armored battle along the Kuwait-Saudi border would favor the United States, with its superiority in the air, its more sophisticated command and control, and the flexibility of its tactical style.

But it is far more likely that the United States will have to take the initiative. If so, we will need a pretext, although a particular incident may be less necessary than a clear articulation of Saddam's acts of war against us—i.e., the seizure of our nationals as hostages and the attempt to annihilate a small country aligned with us. But if a triggering event is required, it will easily be found, in the death or mistreatment of American hostages, a clash in the skies near the Saudi-Kuwait border brought about either by loose rules of engagement, or by more aggressive moves, like an invitation by the Emir of Kuwait for the United States to patrol Kuwaiti air space.

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Should such incidents not be forthcoming, or should they appear unworthy of the United States and its allies, a simple ultimatum would suffice. It would be neither unjust nor (in the United States, at any rate) unpopular to tell Saddam that he had forty-eight hours to begin returning hostages and to pledge himself to withdraw from the gulf. But in any event, and however large-scale hostilities might start, it is imperative that Bush ask Congress for a declaration of war from the outset. Among other things, this would ward off some of the recriminations that would inevitably follow an attempt to wage war without the explicit consent of the American people and their elected representatives.

Our first offensive strategy would be that of siege. After several months of embargo the Iraqis may not—probably will not—be feeling economic effects so severe as to make them surrender on American terms. But military force could be used with the aim of creating in a few months the effects that would otherwise take a year or more to appear. This would entail more ruthless enforcement by mining and interdiction of a blockade by land, sea, and air, as well as limited raids against economic targets like power plants and oil-storage sites to accelerate the collapse of the Iraqi economy. Such a strategy would have the merit of relative cheapness (at least initially) in terms of human life. Presumably American allies would favor this, the least violent, military option, although the front-line Arab states might regard it as a mere half-measure likely to produce the adverse consequences of a more aggressive campaign but few of the benefits. Nonetheless, this option would allow the United States to begin working toward at least one unstated objective—namely, the reduction of Iraq's long-term military potential.

On the other hand, it is hard to see why such a strategy would work quickly. Saddam would retain the initiative, and could react by lashing out at Israel, at Saudi Arabia and the other Arab gulf states, or by unleashing terrorism in the United States. Nor can the Bush administration assume that so constrained a use of military power would find favor either with the American public or with the American military, which would detect in this approach shades of the "signaling" strategy that failed so dismally against Ho Chi Minh in the first years of the Vietnam war. Finally, the siege strategy would undoubtedly bring about some discord in the alliance, for not all allies (particularly the Europeans) would go along with it.

The second offensive strategy might be termed "Victory Through Air Power." It would involve launching a massive aerial-bombardment campaign against Iraq of the kind outlined by the ill-fated General Dugan. Dugan, an extremely able if indiscreet officer who paid for his loose tongue with his job, told newspapermen that the United States would first win command of the air and then go not only after air fields and other conventional military targets, but after Saddam himself, as well as his family and the Takriti clan that dominates the Iraqi regime.

This strategy would take as its point of departure the argument that Iraq would make an ideal target for such a campaign. Unlike Vietnam, Iraq has no triple canopy jungle to impede targeting, and no superpower patron to resupply it. In the absence of other major threats to American security, particularly in Europe, the United States would be free to concentrate its attention and its resources on a single campaign. Improved munitions would allow far greater precision in the conduct of air strikes than at any time in military history, and the lack of Iraqi experience in air defense would make it difficult for them to react directly. American losses could be kept relatively low—say, in the hundreds at most—and many of our objectives could be achieved directly, possibly including the elimination of Saddam, but also the damaging of his nuclear, chemical, and conventional-arms industries. It is true that they could not be completely eliminated, but Iraqi progress in these areas could be set back years if not decades. Just as important, a valuable lesson could be administered to Iraq and to other potential outlaw states about the penalties of a drive to power of this kind. The "Victory Through Air Power" strategy has the further merits of speed and of allowing for allied participation, including substantial Saudi involvement, that of the British Royal Air Force, and of the air detachments of Canada, France, and other countries that may arrive in the theater.

But such a scheme has its drawbacks as well. No air campaign by itself is likely to turn the Iraqis out of Kuwait, nor could the destruction of particular targets, Saddam included, be assured. It is virtually certain that thousands of hostages and Iraqi civilians would perish in a campaign of this kind, creating domestic revulsion in the West and in the region. Barring some major Iraqi provocation, one would have to assume that this strategy would fracture the anti-Iraq coalition, and possibly allow some of its more reluctant members to declare their neutrality between the two sides.

To be sure, given time and an absence of restrictions, an air campaign might be as effective as it proved in late 1944 and in 1945 against Germany and Japan. (Contrary to a commonly heard view, the leveling of Dresden and Tokyo did not build up the Axis will to resist; nor is it the case that economic life could persist in the face of such an onslaught.) But neither time nor the willingness to wage war *à l'outrance* may exist in this instance: 1990 is not 1945, and although

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Saddam's regime may be as evil in some sense as those of Tojo or Hitler, the United States does not yet see him as an enemy of the same class.

An air strategy would be hard to maintain for months without action on the ground as well. If the Iraqis held out, the urge to finish the job once and for all would become too strong to resist. This leads us to our third and final offensive option, which one might call "Normandy Revisited"—an attempt to liberate Kuwait after an air campaign as intense as, but briefer than, that which preceded the invasion of France in June 1944.

Here we have a strategy that would achieve America's openly stated objectives, although most of the unstated ones would require a larger air campaign not directly in support of the liberation of Kuwait. Depending on their reading of the terrain, Iraqi deployments, and the morale of their enemy, the American commanders might try to encircle Kuwait by swinging around the Iraqi right flank or by amphibious landings near the Iraq-Kuwait border. They could, just as well, feint these maneuvers and try to break into the fortified region of Kuwait City. But in any event, they would attempt to settle the issue by main force.

This strategy, even if pursued through indirect operations and clever maneuvers, would be a head-on approach to the problem of war with Iraq. But unless the Iraqis prove a fragile opponent, the strategy would have many costs. It could actually meet with failure, the kind of rebuff that American forces have often suffered in their first clashes with an enemy, and this could have incalculable consequences at home and abroad. Barring a quick Iraqi collapse it could cost thousands, maybe tens of thousands, of American casualties. Although some Egyptians and Saudi units might take heavy losses, the grim fact would be that the United States would probably bear the brunt. And the President would have to explain to the American people why there were thousands of American widows and orphans, but no grieving German or Japanese wives and children, in a war fought in part on their behalf.

"Normandy Revisited" thus could easily bring us face to face with horrors that we have successfully avoided thus far, including the death or mutilation of soldiers who are also the mothers of young children, or their rape at the hands of an enemy soldiery. Such a war could also be seen as a "rich man's war and a poor man's fight"—the poor in this situation being those upwardly mobile lower-income youths who fill the enlisted ranks, while their college-bred, more affluent peers shun service in what is, after all, a volunteer military. Under all these circumstances, the Bush administration could soon find itself caught between the pressure either to end the war quickly, with an unsatisfactory compromise, or to escalate, even to the point of using nuclear weapons.

In all three offensive scenarios, a number of difficulties lurk. First among these is managing the cumbersome alliance that Bush has so proudly assembled. Even if, as is reasonable, the administration decides that it must wage war with a core coalition of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Britain, it faces tremendous problems of command and control. The histories of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam suggest that—with the best will in the world—there can be no substitute for a unified command in the field. Yet no Arab state will openly place its forces under American command, and vice versa. This may be unavoidable, but we must understand that it will exact a price in terms of military effectiveness.

Moreover, a persistent deployment in the Persian Gulf, much less a war there, will have a pernicious long-term impact on American defense planning. Even if the Arab states, the Europeans, and the Japanese pick up the tab (another way in which this could be seen as "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight"), there will be indirect costs which the United States will have to bear. Barring a decision to stop the decline in the defense budget, a prolonged commitment in the gulf will come at the expense of large-scale development of new military technologies. In other words, a Persian Gulf war will consume some of our defense seed corn. Congress has squelched the administration's efforts to pour $20 billion in new arms into Saudi Arabia in one shot; it has similarly put paid to an effort to allow the Defense Department to accept and spend as it saw fit any amount of money donated by a foreign government to the Pentagon. These moves by the Pentagon bespeak a thoughtless focus on immediate concerns in making decisions about how best to defend the Persian Gulf over the long haul. Loose talk by administration officials about using the Persian Gulf crisis as an opportunity to create enduring alliances in that region, and possibly even a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement, have a similar quality. Only after a war will the United States be in a position to figure out how much freedom it will have to reshape the Middle East, let alone to what extent it will wish to reshape it.

All of the options outlined above, then, have their drawbacks. On balance, however, we would be well-advised to move sooner rather than later, and to do so with a prolonged and intensive air campaign followed up some time—weeks or even months later—by advances on the ground. For not only are the uncertainties of an early ground operation enormous, the domestic political consequences could be catastrophic. The reason the United States should strike sooner rather than later is that Saddam is a dangerous man to whom to concede the initiative. By attacking Israel, destabilizing

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Jordan, or concluding a treaty of convenience with Iran (shades of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, save that this would follow rather than precede a bloody war between the two), Saddam can redefine the conflict in terms unfavorable to us. Nor are his military preparations to be dismissed. The longer he has to fortify Kuwait, to prepare his armies and people for war, and to lay the groundwork for a campaign of terror and subversion overseas, the harder he will make it for us. The crest of peacetime popular support for intervention in the gulf is near or even past. As time wears on, fears for the hostages, confusion about the worth of our objectives, recriminations about America's prewar policy toward Iraq will sap our will to fight.

WITHOUT a war we will probably not turn Saddam out of Kuwait, and we will certainly fail to set back his programs of chemical and nuclear armament. Unless we crush him and batter his war machine we will open the way to schemes of Iraqi hegemony in the Arab world fed by vast financial resources, a surprisingly sophisticated technological base, and absolute ruthlessness. The stakes are not merely politically unimpeded access to oil, or the life of an independent Kuwait, or even the stability of the global economy, but the very nature of the world our children and grandchildren will inhabit. A world safe for Saddam Hussein is a world safe, ultimately, for nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare waged to feed or, in defensive desperation, to thwart the ambitions of Saddam and his ilk. That world looms less than ten years ahead of us. The Hitler analogy may be overdone, but at the end of the day there is a good bit to be said for it. Saddam Hussein is a man who must be stopped, his sword broken, and his plunder wrested from him. Other nations must play their part, but only the United States can lead the fight.

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Harold Bloom's "J"

Robert Alter

THE well-known literary critic Harold Bloom will no doubt provoke, as he clearly intends, a storm of excitement, consternation, and ire by proposing that the so-called J writer, usually thought to be responsible for the earliest strand of the Pentateuch, was a woman. The project of *The Book of J*,* a work undertaken in collaboration with the poet David Rosenberg, who has done the translations of the biblical texts, bears a curious relation to that of Samuel Butler's quirky book published in 1897, *The Authoress of the Odyssey*. Bloom makes no mention of Butler, but there is some kinship between the lines of argumentation of the two books. Bloom, however, is after bigger game than the mere discovery of the gender of a revered ancient writer masked in anonymity.

There is no reason to be startled at the possibility that J was a woman, a possibility also put forth—tentatively and cautiously—by Richard Elliott Friedman in *Who Wrote the Bible?*† One might suppose that such an idea would be inspired by contemporary feminism, though Bloom actually positions himself as virtually an adversary of that movement, at least in its academic variant. As he spins out the hypothesis with his characteristic verve, wit, and flair for the unexpected, the hypothesis at moments becomes a beguiling one. We know very little about the education given the two sexes in ancient Israel, but both archeological evidence and certain indications in the biblical texts themselves suggest that literacy was quite widespread, and there are certainly no grounds for excluding altogether the idea that one or more of the biblical authors may have been female. What Samuel Butler roundly declared of the Odyssey is equally apt for the writings designated by scholarship as J: "It may be urged that it is extremely improbable that any woman in any age should write such a masterpiece as the Odyssey. But so it also is that any man should do so." Thus, I do not think the claim that J was a woman is susceptible of refutation—a statement that can be made, incidentally, of many a latter-day theory about the Bible. However, what motivates Bloom to make the claim and what evidence he offers to support it (two rather different considerations) are questions worth pursuing.

BUT before confronting these compelling issues of how we are to conceive of authorship in the Bible, I am obliged to raise the painful question of the relation of *The Book of J* to the Hebrew text of the Bible. Bloom has made a catastrophic decision in tying his project to the translation of David Rosenberg. (The book as a whole comprises about 110 pages in large type of the Rosenberg translation and double that number of closely printed pages devoted to Bloom's introductions and commentaries.) There is abundant evidence that when Bloom talks about J he is actually referring to Rosenberg's English version of J, and the distance between the two is very considerable.

The first, and lesser, problem is an aesthetic one. J—who as Richard Friedman properly notes, is not really distinguishable from the Pentateuchal source E stylistically—writes wonderfully compact, beautifully cadenced Hebrew, using a supple, predominantly paratactic syntax, and adhering, it is safe to assume, with nice precision to the idiomatic norms of the ancient language. Rosenberg's English is often syntactically choppy and elliptic and rhythmically bumpy, making abundant use of dashes, sometimes sounding like

ROBERT ALTER is Class of 1937 Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. His books include *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, and *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, of which he is co-editor.

* Translated from the Hebrew by David Rosenberg, interpreted by Harold Bloom, Grove Weidenfeld, 352 pp., $21.95. The term "J" is an element of the Documentary Hypothesis, initially articulated by German Bible scholars in the 19th century. According to that theory, the first four books of the Pentateuch were woven together by a redactor (R) out of three distinct literary strands which in effect represent different and in many respects competing versions of the traditional history and laws. What are assumed to be the two oldest strands (10th and 9th centuries B.C.E.) are designated J and E after the characteristic names for the Deity each uses—*Yahweh* (in German spelled with a J) and *Elohim*. The third strand is thought to stem from priestly circles and hence is called P. Scholarly consensus, not without some vehement dissent, views P as late, perhaps post-Exilic (5th century B.C.E.), possibly just before the final redaction or actually blurring into R. (The Book of Deuteronomy is considered to be an entirely different strand, D, later than either E or J but earlier than P.)

† Prentice Hall (1988).

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a weak imitation of Leopold Bloom's telegraphic style in *Ulysses*, and shuttling between past and present tenses in inscrutable ways for which the Hebrew offers scant justification. As for idiomatic usage, here are a few characteristic instances of Rosenberg's ear for English: Genesis 18:11, "Sarah no longer had her woman's flow" (literally, "the way of women") is conveyed as "The periods of women ceased to exist." The oracle about Jacob and Esau, "the elder will serve the younger," is represented as "youth grows senior over age." The biblical idiom of polite deference or subservience, "if I have found favor in your eyes," is rendered as "if your heart be warmed," which not only fails as English usage but also introduces an element of emotionality quite alien to the Hebrew expression of ancient *politesse* in a hierarchical social order.

More gravely, Rosenberg repeatedly misconstrues biblical terms or attaches arbitrary meanings to them. The "taskmasters" of the Exodus story incongruously turn into "policemen" in his version—the meaning the word has been assigned in modern Hebrew. The "city square" (*reḥov*) in which the angels visiting Sodom offer to spend the night is converted into a "broad road," something for which, given the ground plan of Canaanite cities, there could be no conceivable place in a built-up town. Without any philological warrant, the Hebrew for "evil," *ra'ah*, is repeatedly rendered as "contempt," a choice that Bloom somehow fancies as a great discovery of Rosenberg's pointing to J's artistic aims. The Hebrew *tsedeq*, "justice," "righteousness," and in some poetic texts, "victory," is unaccountably translated as "tolerance." And the list could go on and on of instances in which Rosenberg's English equivalents of the Hebrew are freewheeling inventions or downright misprisions.

His truly lethal tactic as a translator, however, and the one on which Bloom builds most, is his decision to make his version a loose—poetic?—variation on the original or an interpretive paraphrase of it. J (like E) is one of the most chastely concise, brilliantly understated writers in the whole Western tradition. He, or she, steadily resists the emotive term, the explicit judgment, the self-explication, the effusive lyric gesture. Alas, these are all traits that Rosenberg promiscuously embraces. In his version, Cain is not "a wanderer and a fugitive in the earth" but "homeless as the blowing wind"—another phrase Bloom cites with relish as though it were in the Hebrew, as though J might really have some stylistic affinity with Bob Dylan. God in Genesis 12 does not just "afflict Pharaoh with great afflictions" but does it "as if with lightning." The maiden Rebekah, "very fair in appearance," is turned into a heroine of romance fiction when she is represented as "lovely as an apparition, as fresh." The burning bush is not simply "this great sight" but "this luminous thing." The enemies of the Lord in the incantation for the transportation of the ark in Numbers do not merely "scatter" but "disappear like stars." Thus, the spareness in the use of metaphor that is a hallmark of J's genius is sunk in a poetaster's fondness for metaphorical clichés.

It is baffling that a man of Harold Bloom's intelligence should be guilty of so extreme a lapse in taste, even without the ability to judge the philological issues, as to endorse this translation. What is disturbing is that his construction of J is far too often based on things in Rosenberg undreamt of in J's philosophy. Let me cite an extended example, one that Bloom himself remarks on in detail at the end of his introduction. He quotes in entirety four English versions of the Tower of Babel story—Tyndale, the King James Version, E. A. Speiser's 1964 translation, and Rosenberg, in order to explain to the reader Rosenberg's superiority in conveying the subtle literary art of J. Here is the Rosenberg version:

> Now listen: all the earth uses one tongue, one and the same words. Watch: they journey from the east, arrive at a valley in the land of Sumer, settle there.
>
> "We can bring ourselves together," they said, "like stone on stone, use brick for stone: bake it until hard." For mortar they heated bitumen.
>
> "If we bring ourselves together," they said, "we can build a city and tower; its top touching the sky—to arrive at fame. Without a name we're unbound, scattered over the face of the earth."
>
> Yahweh came down to watch the city and the tower the sons of man were bound to build. "They are one people with the same tongue," said Yahweh. "They conceive this between them, and it leads up until no boundary exists to what they will touch. Between us, let's descend, baffle their tongue until each is scatterbrain to his friend."
>
> From there Yahweh scattered them over the whole face of the earth; the city there came unbound.
>
> That is why they named the place Bavel; their tongues were baffled there by Yahweh. Scattered by Yahweh, from there, they arrived at the ends of the earth.

Aesthetic considerations aside, this is less an English version of the original than a prefabricated interpretation masquerading as a translation. The bringing ourselves together, with the stones and bricks as a simile for the act of unification, is nowhere to be seen in the Hebrew, and no Hebrew stones clutter this Mesopotamian plain. Bloom speaks of the "dramatic irony" in J's use of the phrase "between us," though that phrase does not exist in the Hebrew text, which has only a first-person plural, "let us go down." Most grievously, Bloom waxes enthusiastic over

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"Rosenberg's care in repeating the subtle J's play upon 'bound,' 'boundary,' 'unbound.'" The fact of the matter is that there is not a *single word* in the nine verses of the Hebrew original that suggests either bound or boundary. Although most of the biblical writers were indeed virtuosos in word-play, as recent literary analysis has repeatedly shown, the only word-play here that has a basis in J is baffle/Bavel (the rather feeble scatterbrain/scatter is still another interpolation of Rosenberg's). The translator, in other words, has decided that the theme of the story is the violation of boundaries, and through his own heavy-handed puns he has "thematized" this perception in the text—the very last thing that would be done by so magisterially laconic a writer as J.

Such comments as these by Bloom on Rosenberg lead me to the reluctant conclusion that Bloom could not possibly be reading the Bible in the original. He does appear to have enough Hebrew to consult lexicons, not always with great profit, and at one point he provides a translation of his own, which I assume he must have done by looking at existing English versions with some inspection of the Hebrew. But since he does repeatedly refer to Hebrew terms, I am compelled to say that his allusions to Hebrew often betray an ignorance of the language—something that sets his project off from that of Samuel Butler, whose classical Greek was evidently quite sound. J is several times called by Bloom a *gevurah* in Rehoboam's royal court, a term he thinks has the meaning "grand lady." But *gevirah* is the word for "grand lady," whereas *gevurah* can only be an abstract noun, meaning "power" or "bravery." The effect is like having a French writer tell us that Sir Philip Sidney was a "mastery," or *grand seigneur*, in the court of Elizabeth. Bloom follows Rosenberg in imagining that *nefesh*—"life force," "vital spirit," "essential self," and occasionally "gullet"—can also mean "flesh," something that would make gibberish of the declaration in Genesis that "the blood is the *nefesh*." He is similarly led astray by his translator in claiming that the root *'rr*, a clear Hebrew term for "curse" and repeatedly used as a flat antithesis to "bless," really means "to bind" (apparently a confusion with the root *'sr*). He informs us that in the phrase "like smoke from the kiln" after the incineration of Sodom, "We are intended to remember the fiery kiln of the covenant vision" in Genesis 15, though in fact entirely unrelated Hebrew terms are used in the two texts. Above all, he repeatedly insists on the aptness of phrases that incorporate Rosenberg's adjectival and adverbial ornamentation, and on word-play that is all Rosenberg's—conservatively, 80 percent of Rosenberg's puns have no basis in the original.

ALL THIS does not entirely invalidate Bloom's bold attempt to rescue the original J from 2,500 years of overlaid editing and institutional interpretation, but it surely casts a large shadow of doubt over his undertaking. Bloom is an intuitive critic, something I happen to admire, but when he says that his "ear" tells him that this or that is J, that such was J's real intention, or that thus and so must have the original J version displaced by those later dowdy establishment figures, E and P, one is entitled to be skeptical. How can even the most brilliantly intuitive critic "hear" the nice inflections of an author's voice except in the author's own language? How seriously would we take someone who claimed that Shakespeare's sonnets were really written by a contemporary countess if we knew that the critic had read the sonnets mainly in a highly eccentric Italian translation, with intermittent references to the original aided by an Italian-English dictionary?

Bloom's attitude toward the idea that J was a woman is a little slippery, perhaps appropriately so. He begins by announcing, quite sensibly, that "all our accounts of the Bible are scholarly fictions or religious fantasies, and generally serve rather tendentious purposes." His own undertaking then is presented as just such a fiction, one for which he offers an excellent justification. "When script becomes Scripture," he notes, "reading is numbed by taboo and inhibition. Even if imagining an author and calling her J is an arbitrary and personal fiction, something like that imagining is necessary if we are to be stirred out of our numbness." Fair enough, and the salutary effect of *The Book of J*, whatever its faults, is precisely that it has the power to stir us from the numbness of automatic response to a sacred text. Not surprisingly, however, as Bloom continues to expatiate on J, "she" more and more becomes a definite historical figure, not an arbritary fiction, assigned a definite location in time, place, and social standing, which in turn is used to explain the intentions of her writing.

The decision about her gender, of which Bloom says he is intuitively convinced, is a fine way to *épater les fidèles*; every time the pronoun "she" occurs, readers are likely to find themselves shaken out of their preconceptions about the Bible, and that is all to the good. But the argument assumes a high degree of historical specificity (very much like that of Samuel Butler, who was persuaded, quite wrongly, that he had figured out precisely when and in what town of Sicily the authoress of the Odyssey lived, and what were her age and personal condition when she did the writing). J, then, was an aristocratic lady in the court of Rehoboam, a friendly competitor of the author of the David story, with whom she exchanged notes and rough drafts, and a passionate admirer of the figure of David, whom she represented obliquely in her Joseph.

Bloom may have taken heart in his project from Richard Friedman, whose *Who Wrote the Bible?*, though more circumspect, seeks to pinpoint the

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temporal, geographic, and social location of each of the major biblical writers. One can admire the intellectual detective work of such undertakings, but given the paucity of reliable historical data we have, especially when anonymous authors who have been edited and combined with each other are involved, historical scholarship is bound to be more than halfway to historical fiction, as Bloom concedes at the beginning but almost forgets thereafter. The difficulties of the task are twofold: dating texts that provide the scantest grounds for fixing them at any point in a span of two or three, sometimes four or more, centuries; teasing out the original separate strands from the received text—the cunningly intertwined work of that genius or villain R, the Redactor (Friedman thinks he was Ezra the Scribe or someone close to Ezra). Perhaps the latter difficulty has been largely overcome by two centuries of text-critical scholarship, though I remain an agnostic about the certitude of identified textual components at a good many specific points. In this connection, every serious student of the Bible should look at Robert Polzin's *Samuel and the Deuteronomist.** With a massive apparatus of notes and the most detailed reference to previous scholarship, Polzin contends that the neat divisions of the text of Samuel into Deuteronomistic Framework, Ark Narrative, Succession History, and so forth, become unconvincing in the face of the architectonic literary character of the text. Some of Polzin's arguments for artful unity by way of foreshadowing and allegorization within the narrative of subsequent themes may be too ingenious, but he does put forth a powerful, meticulously documented reading that makes one think twice about the atomistic conclusions of modern biblical scholarship.

But even if we assume that we know confidently in all significant instances what is J, E, and P, there remains the intractable problem of what Sir Edmund Leach has called "unscrambling the omelette." Perhaps there once was a splendid J narrative from Adam to Moses, but all that is left of it is what R decided to splice with E and P. The J texts that have come down to us, even if they had a much better translator than David Rosenberg, are an intermittent, inadequate story, a poor thing compared to the wonderful orchestration R has made of all his sources and which we are accustomed to read. Richard Friedman aptly concludes his excavative quest for individual authors with a chapter devoted to the splendid complexities and play of tensions of the final synthesis, a whole which he readily declares is greater than the sum of its parts. Bloom, by contrast, is mesmerized by the idea of the individual author of genius, and so for him whatever subsequent tradition did with J emasculates, or rather, defeminizes her unique imaginative authority.

In any case, unscrambling the omelette is actually less insuperable a difficulty than figuring out when the original eggs were laid, and by which hens. Bloom invests more than is prudent in the idea that J flourished in the court of Rehoboam, Solomon's son, in the latter part of the 10th century B.C.E. The evidence that the Pentateuch addresses the politics of the Davidic dynasty right after the split of the monarchy into two kingdoms is, to put it mildly, highly inferential. Bloom latches onto a suggestion of Richard Friedman's that J refers in code several times to Rehoboam by using the word *raḥav*, "broad," from which that king's name is derived. (The word does not occur in E.) But since this is a perfectly common Hebrew adjective, the line of reasoning resembles that of an analyst in some remote future who, looking at English texts of our own period, would locate them in England between 1939 and 1945 because several occurrences of "church" were seized on as veiled allusions to Churchill. Bloom repeatedly relies on the notion that J and the author of the David narrative knew each other personally and undertook parallel literary enterprises focusing on different historical settings. It is a reasonable enough guess that the David author (I happen to think there was one, not several) lived in Jerusalem two or three generations after David, so the proposed location in the court of Rehoboam may not be far from the mark. But was J his contemporary? There is actually a good deal of evidence in 1 and 2 Samuel, as there is in Joshua and Judges, that J's writing was already a publicly known text, familiar in minute detail, which could be mined for literary allusions. This would obviously not be the case if the narrative of J existed for the David author merely as a friend's work in progress, according to Bloom's own fiction.

Let me rapidly review one example I have discussed at length elsewhere in print, in a volume of rather restricted distribution.† When David's son Amnon is about to rape his half-sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13), he clears the room with the words, *hotsi'u khol 'ish me'alai*, literally, "Take everyone out from before me," the selfsame words Joseph uses before he reveals his identity to his brothers. Then he has only the most brutally abrupt words of dialogue to pronounce to Tamar, "Lie with me, my sister," the very same words, with a shift from masculine imperative to feminine imperative, and the addition of the marker of incest, "my sister," that Potiphar's wife uses as she prepares to lay lustful hands on Joseph. In each case, the verbal response of the intended victim of sexual assault is a breathless verbosity that stands in dramatic contrast to the

* Harper & Row, 296 pp., $38.95.

† "Putting Together Biblical Narrative," in *Cabinet of the Muses*, edited by Mark Griffith and Donald Mastronarde, Scholars Press, 129 pp. $39.95.

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blunt conciseness of the assailant. Finally, after the rape, we are told that Tamar has been wearing a *ketonet pasim*, an ornamented tunic or "coat of many colors." Joseph is the only other figure in the whole Bible who is said to wear that garment. Her tunic, like his, may well be bloodied after an act of fraternal violence, since she is a virgin rape-victim.

What we have, then, in 2 Samuel 13, is a brilliantly interwoven thread of allusions to the Joseph story *in J's textual version*, shrewdly set in reverse chronological order. The climax of the Joseph story, the self-revelation and the reconciliation with the brothers—"take everyone out from before me"—is here the starting point, a prelude to an act of violence of brother against sister, which will entail fatal consequences. Then the echo of the failed sexual attempt on Joseph in the successful sexual assault on Tamar pointedly stresses the crucial difference in physical vulnerability between male and female: Joseph is able to break away and run outside; Tamar is overpowered, a fact the narrator underscores by choosing three verbs indicating superior strength to represent Amnon's act. Finally, the ornamented tunic that is the beginning of Joseph's disaster at the hands of his brothers and a key element in his whole plot, the token of his seeming death, is introduced at the end of Tamar's story as an emblem of the personal catastrophe and social disgrace she has suffered.

Even in this quick summary of the evidence, it should be apparent that the author of 2 Samuel 13 could have cast such a cunning network of significant allusions only if both he and his audience were quite familiar with J's Joseph story in a version verbally very close to the one that has come down to us. This would place J at the very least a couple of generations before the David writer.

It is certainly to Bloom's credit as a literary theorist that through two decades during which Roland Barthes's idea of the "death of the author" has reigned supreme, when critics became accustomed to speak of "the text" doing things rather than the writer, he has remained resolutely attached to the idea of individual personalities willfully asserting themselves in the act of writing, struggling with other personalities who are their predecessors. J, along with Shakespeare, to whom he often compares her, is his parade example of the "strong writer," one of the two strongest in our whole tradition; after her, all subsequent writers find themselves "belated," wrestling in vain to match her achievement. Since, as we have seen, the fixing of temporal priority among biblical writers is by no means simple, it is instructive to note that a new book, working on avowedly Bloomian assumptions, by Leslie Brisman, a Yale colleague and friend of Bloom, uses those assumptions to arrive at precisely the opposite conclusion.* In Brisman's ingenious, resourceful reading, J is a belated writer confronted by the deft but orthodox version of the great story of origins already established by E. In this view, J is also seen as a canny, daring, surprising writer, but he (not she here) repeatedly uses those resources to put a new spin on E, to introduce ironies and ambiguities into E's received version. Perhaps this is a little improbable, but then again, why not? Or why not J and E as contemporaries, as Richard Friedman suggests, the former working in the Southern Kingdom, the latter in the Northern one?

The issue of gender, though constantly flaunted by Bloom, is in the end much less important for him than the notion of J as the ultimate "strong writer." It must be said that the evidence offered for J's female identity is rather tenuous. We are repeatedly told, often with engaging wit, that J in Genesis exercises an extraordinary degree of imaginative sympathy for the plight of women and the viewpoint of the female characters. But this is also true of the authors of Judges and Samuel—note the instance of the rape of Tamar—not to speak of later books like Ruth and Esther. By the same reasoning, which Samuel Butler similarly invokes for the Odyssey, one could easily conclude that *Anna Karenina*, with its splendidly realized if doomed heroine and its large gallery of repulsive, feckless, or clumsy men, must have been written by a woman. The evidence of literary history suggests that there is no reason at all to assume that literary imaginations of the first order are trapped in this fashion within the walls of gender. Bloom goes further in his feminizing view of J, contending that she "had no heroes, only heroines." I am not sure one should so readily dismiss Jacob as a hero simply because, like Odysseus, he is wily and works himself into ambiguous situations, and Bloom is compelled to exclude the major example of Joseph by claiming that J's only ideal male figure was David, and Joseph was put forth as a "surrogate" for David. In point of fact, the earliest stratum of literary narrative drawn on by J may have been prior to David. What is clear is that the author of the David story in our received text made explicit verbal allusions to J's version of both Joseph and Jacob.

The ultimate problem about Bloom's effort "to seek a reversal of twenty-five hundred years of institutionalized misreading" is not just the paucity and the elusiveness of the literary-historical data but the discrepancy between his Milton-to-Blake conception of authorship and the nature of the ancient texts. For all its startling originality, the Bible as the work of anonymous writers is a strongly traditional form of literary expression in which, for example, even the keenest analysts have difficulty in distinguishing between the style of J

* *The Voice of Jacob: On the Composition of Genesis*, Indiana University Press, 144 pp., $22.50.

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and E except on limited terminological grounds. (Samuel Butler made a fundamental mistake analogous to Bloom's in assuming a definite biography for his authoress, not guessing the Greek epic's oral-formulaic composition with traditional materials that would be discovered several decades later.) The Documentary Hypothesis is quite properly designated as such, and not as an Authorial Hypothesis. It is generally thought that the Priestly Document, P, is the product of a school of writers, or perhaps the accretion of successive generations of writers. There is no compelling reason to assume that J or E is the unitary work of a single man or woman.

To cite one small instance, Bloom has a good deal to say about J's cryptic Bridegroom of Blood story in Exodus 4 as a characteristic expression of her imaginative daring. For him, the strange tale of God's attempt on Moses' life is of a piece with J's sophisticated feminine attitude toward the Deity in general, which he describes as "a mother's somewhat wary but still proudly amused stance toward a favorite son who has grown up to be benignly powerful but also eccentrically irascible." What this ignores, in regard to both the style and the substance of the episode, is its manifestly archaic character. The consensus of biblical scholarship, with which for once I emphatically concur, sees the Bridegroom of Blood as very old, mythic material, embedded, for reasons we cannot know, in the literary tradition that eventuated in J. It strains credence to imagine that the writer responsible for the psychological probing, the rich comedy, and the stylistic elegance of J's Joseph was also the "sensibility" that produced the Bridegroom of Blood. For the fundamentalism of revealed faith Bloom substitutes a fundamentalism of authorial personality, and I cannot believe that brings us closer to the distinctive literary nature of the ancient Hebrew texts.

In regard, then, to the character of the writer, his or her gender and historical setting, *The Book of J* is indeed a fiction or fantasy, and not necessarily a helpful one. There remains to be said a final word or two about Bloom's larger project. As I have already indicated, by dint of sheer imaginative energy, a willingness to look at the antithetical hidden side of things, he does succeed in opening up a new vista on this text that has determined so much of our culture. His chief contribution is to peel back the thick, multilayered film of religious interpretation and allow us to contemplate the possibility that the earliest major author of the Bible was not really a religious writer, at least not in any sense assimilable to our concepts of religion. "The distinction between sacred and secular texts," he says at the outset, "results from social and political decisions, and thus is not a literary distinction at all." He encourages us to see J as a writer continuously delighting in the very possibilities of representing human and divine realities, "uncanny, tricky, sublime, ironic, a visionary of incommensurates, and so the direct ancestor of Kafka." J "overwhelms" us, in the Bloomian terminology of strong writing, by determining the very conditions through which the psychology of men and women might be represented in literature. After J, it was only Shakespeare who again "changed us by changing representation itself." In one respect, even Shakespeare does not match J, for she had the imaginative boldness to conceive God Himself as a complex literary character—a conception that even recent literary analysis has rarely been able to assimilate because we remain in thrall to later, theological imaginings of a transcendent God Who exists beyond the realm of mere literature. Such notions of what Bloom wrily calls a "divine bureaucrat" have little to do with the boldness of J's imaginative world. Commenting on ancient Hebrew anthropomorphism, Bloom observes that "the normative and the scholarly are crude, while J is sophisticated. Her idea of Yahweh is imaginative, even Shakespearian, while the normative reductions of her Yahweh are quite primitive."

Looking back over Bloom's many books, one detects in him a hidden aspiration to move from critic to heresiarch, to become the pathfinder of a Jewish way—alternately literary and gnostic—antithetical to received religion. In his attempted recovery of J, he has found at the very source of Jewish tradition a figure who articulates a "monistic vitalism" beyond all institutional categories, beyond the neat division of the world into banned and blessed. There are gaping holes in the fabric of his argument, but that does not necessarily mean we should decline his invitation to look at the ancient writings with fresh eyes.

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Living With Roe v. Wade

Margaret Liu McConnell

There is something decidedly unappealing to me about the pro-life activists seen on the evening news as they are dragged away from the entrances to abortion clinics across the country. Perhaps it is that their poses remind me of sulky two-year-olds, sinking to their knees as their frazzled mothers try to haul them from the playground. Or perhaps it is because I am a little hard put to believe, when one of them cries out, often with a Southern twang, "Ma'am, don't keel your baby," that he or she could really care that deeply about a stranger's fetus. After all, there are limits to compassion and such concern seems excessive, suspect.

Besides, as pro-choice adherents like to point out, the fact that abortion is legal does not mean that someone who is against abortion will be forced to have one against her wishes. It is a private matter, so they say, between a woman and her doctor. From this it would follow that those opposed to abortion are no more than obnoxious busybodies animated by their own inner pathologies to interfere in the private lives of strangers.

Certainly this is the impression conveyed by those news clips of anti-abortion blockades being broken up by the police. We pity the woman, head sunk and afraid, humiliated in the ancient shame that all around her know she is carrying an unwanted child. Precisely because she is pregnant our hearts go out to her in her vulnerability. It would seem that those workers from the abortion clinic, shielding arms around her shoulders, their identification vests giving them the benign look of school-crossing guards, are her protectors. They are guiding her through a hostile, irrational crowd to the cool and orderly safety of the clinic and the medical attention she needs.

But is it possible that this impression is mistaken? Is it possible that those who guide the woman along the path to the abortionist's table are not truly her protectors, shoring her up on the road to a dignified life in which she will best be able to exercise her intellectual and physical faculties free from any kind of oppression? Is it possible that they are serving, albeit often unwittingly, to keep her and millions of other women on a demeaning and rather lonely treadmill—a treadmill on which these women trudge through cycles of sex without commitment, unwanted pregnancy, and abortion, all in the name of equal opportunity and free choice?

Consider yet again the woman on the path to an abortion. She is already a victim of many forces. She is living in a social climate in which she is expected to view sex as practically a form of recreation that all healthy women should pursue eagerly. She has been conditioned to fear having a child, particularly in her younger years, as an unthinkable threat to her standard of living and to the career through which she defines herself as a "real" person. Finally, since 1973, when the Supreme Court in *Roe* v. *Wade* declared access to abortion a constitutional right, she has been invited, in the event that she does become pregnant, not only to have an abortion, but to do so without sorrow and with no moral misgivings. As the highly vocal pro-abortion movement cheers her on with rallying cries of "Freedom of Choice," she may find herself wondering: "Is this the great freedom we've been fighting for? The freedom to sleep with men who don't care for us, the freedom to scorn the chance to raise a child? The freedom to let doctors siphon from our bodies that most precious gift which women alone are made to receive: a life to nurture?"

My goal here is not to persuade militant pro-choicers that abortion is wrong. Instead, it is to establish that abortion cannot and should not be seen as strictly a matter between a woman and her doctor. For the knowledge that the law allows free access to abortion affects all of us directly and indirectly by the way it shapes the social climate. Most directly and most easy to illustrate, the realization that any pregnancy, intended or accidental, may be aborted at will affects women in their so-called childbearing years. The indirect effects are more difficult to pinpoint. I would like tentatively to suggest that *Roe* v. *Wade* gives approval, at the highest level of judgment in this country, to certain attitudes which, when manifest at the lowest economic levels, have extremely destructive consequences.

Margaret Liu McConnell is a young writer living in New York. This is her first published article.

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But to begin with the simpler task of examining *Roe*'s questionable effect on the world women inhabit: I—who at thirty-two am of the age to have "benefited" from *Roe*'s protections for all my adult years—offer here some examples of those "benefits."

It was my first year at college, my first year away from my rather strict, first-generation American home. I had a boyfriend from high school whom I liked and admired but was not in love with, and I was perfectly satisfied with the stage of heavy-duty necking we had managed, skillfully avoiding the suspicious eyes of my mother. But once I got to college I could think of no good reason not to go farther. For far from perceiving any constraints around me, I encountered all manner of encouragement to become "sexually active"—from the health center, from newspapers, books, and magazines, from the behavior of other students, even from the approval of other students' parents of their children's "liberated" sexual conduct.

Yet the truth is that I longed for the days I knew only from old movies and novels, those pre-60's days when boyfriends visiting from other colleges stayed in hotels (!) and dates ended with a lingering kiss at the door. I lived in an apartment-style dormitory, six women sharing three bedrooms and a kitchen. Needless to say, visiting boyfriends did not stay in hotels. By the end of my freshman year three out of the six of us would have had abortions.

How did it come to pass that so many of us got pregnant? How has it come to pass that more than one-and-one-half million women each year get pregnant in this country, only to have abortions? Nowadays it is impossible to go into a drugstore without bumping into the condoms on display above the checkout counters. And even when I was in college, contraception was freely available, and everyone knew that the health center, open from nine to four, was ready to equip us with the contraceptive armament we were sure to need.

Nevertheless, thanks to *Roe* v. *Wade*, we all understood as well that if anything went wrong, there would be no threat of a shotgun marriage, or of being sent away in shame to bear a child, or of a dangerous back-alley abortion. Perhaps the incredible number of "accidental" pregnancies, both at college and throughout the country, finds its explanation in just that understanding. Analogies are difficult to construct in arguments about abortion, for there is nothing quite analogous to terminating a pregnancy. That said, consider this one anyway. If children are sent out to play ball in a yard near a house, a responsible adult, knowing that every once in a while a window will get broken, will still tell them to be very careful not to break any. But what if the children are sent into the yard and told something like this: "Go out and play, and don't worry about breaking any windows. It's bound to happen, and when it does, no problem: it will be taken care of." How many more windows will be shattered?

There were, here and there, some women who seemed able to live outside these pressures. Within my apartment one was an Orthodox Jewish freshman from Queens, another a junior from Brooklyn, also Jewish, who was in the process of becoming Orthodox. They kept kosher as far as was possible in our common kitchen, and on Friday afternoons would cook supper for a group of friends, both men and women. As darkness fell they would light candles and sing and eat and laugh in a circle of light. I remember looking in at their evenings from the doorway to the kitchen, wishing vainly that I could belong to such a group, a group with a code of behavior that would provide shelter from the free-for-all I saw elsewhere. But the only group I felt I belonged to was, generically, "young American woman," and as far as I could see, the norm of behavior for a young American woman was to enjoy a healthy sex life, with or without commitment.

A few months later, again thanks to *Roe* v. *Wade*, I discovered that the logistics of having an abortion were, as promised, extremely simple. The school health center was again at my service. After a few perfunctory questions and sympathetic nods of the head I was given directions to the nearest abortion clinic.

A strange thing has happened since that great freedom-of-choice victory in 1973. Abortion has become the only viable alternative many women feel they have open to them when they become pregnant by accident. Young men no longer feel obligated to offer to "do the right thing." Pregnancy is most often confirmed in a medical setting. Even though it is a perfectly normal and healthy state, in an unwanted pregnancy a woman feels distressed. The situation thus becomes that of a distressed woman looking to trusted medical personnel for relief. Abortion presents itself as the simple, legal, medical solution to her distress. A woman may have private reservations, but she gets the distinct impression that if she does not take advantage of her right to an abortion she is of her own accord refusing a simple solution to her troubles.

That is certainly how it was for me, sitting across from the counselor at the health center, clutching a wad of damp tissues, my heart in my throat. The feeling was exactly parallel to the feeling I had had at the beginning of the school year: I could be defiantly old-fashioned and refuse to behave like a normal American woman, or I could exercise my sexual liberation. Here, six weeks pregnant, I could be troublesome, perverse, and somehow manage to keep the baby, causing tremendous inconvenience to everyone, or I could take the simple route of having an abortion and

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not even miss a single class. The choice was already made.

Physically, also, abortion has become quite a routine procedure. As one of my grosser roommates put it, comforting me with talk of her own experiences, it was about as bad as going to the dentist. My only memory of the operation is of coming out of the general anesthesia to the sound of sobbing all around. I, too, was sobbing, without thought, hard and uncontrollably, as though somehow, deep below the conscious level, below whatever superficial concerns had layered themselves in the day-to-day mind of a busy young woman, I had come to realize what I had done, and what could never be undone.

I have since had three children, and at the beginning of each pregnancy I was presented with the opportunity to have an abortion without even having to ask. For professional reasons my husband and I have moved several times, and each of our children was born in a different city with a different set of obstetrical personnel. In every case I was offered the unsolicited luxury of "keeping my options open": of choosing whether to continue the pregnancy or end it. The polite way of posing the question, after a positive pregnancy test, seems to be for the doctor to ask noncommittally, "And how are we treating this pregnancy?"

Each one of those pregnancies, each one of those expendable bunches of tissue, has grown into a child, each one different from the other. I cannot escape the haunting fact that if I had had an abortion, one of my children would be missing. Not just a generic little bundle in swaddling clothes interchangeable with any other, but a specific child.

I still carry in my mind a picture of that other child who was never born, a picture which changes as the years go by, and I imagine him growing up. For some reason I usually do imagine a boy, tall and with dark hair and eyes. This is speculation, of course, based on my coloring and build and on that of the young man involved. Such speculation seems maudlin and morbid and I do not engage in it on purpose. But whether I like it or not, every now and then my mind returns to that ghost of a child and to the certainty that for seven weeks I carried the beginnings of a being whose coloring and build and, to a large extent, personality were already determined. Buoyant green-eyed girl or shy, dark-haired boy, I wonder. Whoever, a child would have been twelve this spring.

I am not in the habit of exposing this innermost regret, this endless remorse to which I woke too late. I do so only to show that in the wake of *Roe* v. *Wade* abortion has become casual, commonplace, and very hard to resist as an easy way out of an unintended pregnancy, and that more unintended pregnancies are likely to occur when everyone knows there is an easy way out of them. Abortion has become an option offered to women, married as well as unmarried, including those who are financially, physically, and emotionally able to care for a child. This is what *Roe* v. *Wade* guarantees. For all the pro-choice lobby's talk of abortion as a deep personal moral decision, casting abortion as a right takes the weight of morality out of the balance. For, by definition, a right is something one need not feel guilty exercising.

I do not wish a return to the days when a truly desperate woman unable to get a safe legal abortion would risk her life at the hands of an illegal abortionist. Neither could I ever condemn a woman whose own grip on life is so fragile as to render her incapable of taking on the full responsibility for another life, helpless and demanding. But raising abortion to the plane of a constitutional right in order to ensure its accessibility to any woman for any reason makes abortion too easy a solution to an age-old problem.

Human beings have always coupled outside the bounds deemed proper by the societies in which they lived. But the inevitable unexpected pregnancies often served a social purpose. There was a time when many young couples found in the startling new life they had created an undeniable reason to settle down seriously to the tasks of earning a living and making a home. That might have meant taking on a nine-to-five job and assuming a mortgage, a prospect which sounds like death to many baby boomers intent on prolonging adolescence well into middle age. But everyone knows anecdotally if not from straight statistics that many of these same baby boomers owe their own lives to such happy (for them) accidents.

When I became pregnant in college, I never seriously considered getting married and trying to raise a child, although it certainly would have been possible to do so. Why should I have, when the road to an abortion was so free and unencumbered, and when the very operation itself had been presented as a step on the march to women's equality?

I KNOW that no one forced me to do anything, that I was perfectly free to step back at any time and live by my own moral code if I chose to, much as my Orthodox Jewish acquaintances did. But this is awfully hard when the society you consider yourself part of presents abortion as a legal, morally acceptable solution. And what kind of a world would it be if all those in need of a moral structure stepped back to insulate themselves, alone or in groups—ethnic, religious, or economic—each with its own exclusive moral code, leaving behind a chaos at the center? It sounds like New York City on a bad day.

This is not, of course, to ascribe the chaos reigning in our cities directly to *Roe* v. *Wade*. That chaos is caused by a growing and tenacious

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underclass defined by incredibly high rates of drug abuse, and dependence on either crime or welfare for financial support. But sometimes it does seem as though the same attitude behind abortion on demand lies behind the abandonment of parental responsibility which is the most pervasive feature of life in the underclass and the most determinative of its terrible condition.

Parental responsibility can be defined as providing one's offspring at every level of development with that which they need to grow eventually into independent beings capable of supporting themselves emotionally and financially. Different parents will, of course, have different ideas about what is best for a child, and different parents will have different resources to draw upon to provide for their children. But whatever the differences may be, responsible parents will try, to the best of their ability and in accordance with their own lights, to raise their children properly. It is tedious, expensive, and takes a long, long time. For it is not a question of fetal weeks before a human being reaches any meaningful stage of "viability" (how "viable" is a two-year-old left to his own devices? A five-year-old?). It is a question of years, somewhere in the neighborhood of eighteen.

Why does any parent take on such a long, hard task? Because life is a miracle that cannot be denied? Because it is the right thing to do? Because there is a certain kind of love a parent bears a child that does not require a calculated return on investment? Because we would hate ourselves otherwise? All these factors enter into the powerful force that compels parents to give up years of their free time and much of their money to bring up their children. Yet the cool, clinical approach *Roe* v. *Wade* allows all of us—men no less than women—in deciding whether or not we are "ready" to accept the responsibility of an established pregnancy seems to undermine an already weakening cultural expectation that parents simply have a duty to take care of their children.

A middle- or upper-class woman may have high expectations of what she will achieve so long as she is not saddled with a baby. When she finds herself pregnant she is guaranteed the right under *Roe* v. *Wade* to opt out of that long and tedious responsibility, and does so by the hundreds of thousands each year. By contrast, a woman in the underclass who finds herself pregnant is not likely to have great expectations of what life would be like were she free of the burden of her child; abortion would not broaden her horizons and is not usually her choice. Yet she often lacks the maternal will and the resources to take full responsibility for the well-being of her child until adulthood.

To be sure, these two forms of refusing parental responsibility have vastly different effects. But how can the government hope to devise policies that will encourage parental responsibility in the underclass when at the highest level of judgment, that of the Supreme Court, the freedom to opt out of parental responsibility is protected as a right? Or, to put the point another way, perhaps the weakening of the sense of duty toward one's own offspring is a systemic problem in America, present in all classes, with only its most visible manifestation in the underclass.

THE federal Family Support Act of 1988 was the result of much study and debate on how to reform the welfare system to correct policies which have tended to make it easier for poor families to qualify for aid if the father is not part of the household. Among other provisions intended to help keep families from breaking up, states are now required to pay cash benefits to two-parent families and to step up child-support payments from absent fathers. New York City, for example, has this year begun to provide its Department of Health with information, including Social Security numbers, on the parents of every child born in the city. Should the mother ever apply for aid, the father can be tracked down and child-support payments can be deducted from his paycheck. Such a strict enforcement of child-support obligations is a powerful and exciting legal method for society to show that it will not tolerate the willful abandonment of children by their fathers.

It is evident that there is a compelling state interest in promoting the responsibility of both parents toward their child. The compelling interest is that it takes a great deal of money to care for a child whose parents do not undertake the responsibility themselves. For whatever else we may have lost of our humanity over the last several decades, however hardened we have been by violence and by the degradation witnessed daily in the lost lives on the street, we still retain a basic decent instinct to care for innocent babies and children in need.

It is also evident that parental responsibility begins well before the child is born. Thus, the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court of New York in May of this year ruled that a woman who uses drugs during pregnancy and whose newborn has drugs in its system may be brought before Family Court for a hearing on neglect. Yet how can we condemn a woman under law for harming her unborn child while at the same time protecting her right to destroy that child absolutely, for any reason, through abortion? Is the only difference that the first instance entails a monetary cost to society while the second does not?

There is another kind of behavior implicitly condoned by *Roe* v. *Wade*, which involves the value of life itself, and which also has its most frightening and threatening manifestation in the underclass. Consensus on when human life begins has yet to be established and perhaps never will

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be. What is clear, however, is that abortion cuts short the development of a specific human life; it wipes out the future years of a human being, years we can know nothing about. Generally we have no trouble conceiving of lost future years as real loss. Lawsuits routinely place value on lost future income and lost future enjoyment, and we consider the death of a child or a young person to be particularly tragic in lost potential, in the waste of idealized years to come. Yet under *Roe* v. *Wade* the value of the future years of life of the fetus is determined by an individual taking into account only her own well-being.

Back in 1965, justifying his discovery of a constitutional right to privacy which is nowhere mentioned in the Constitution itself, and which helped lay the groundwork for *Roe* v. *Wade*, Justice William O. Douglas invoked the concept of "penumbras, formed by emanations" of constitutional amendments. Is it far-fetched to say that there are "penumbras, formed by emanations" of *Roe* v. *Wade* that grant the right to consider life in relative terms and to place one's own interest above any others? This same "right" when exercised by criminals is a terrifying phenomenon: these are people who feel no guilt in taking a victim's life, who value the future years of that life as nothing compared with their own interest in the victim's property. Of course, one might argue that a fetus is not yet cognizant of its own beingness and that, further, it feels no pain. Yet if a killer creeps up behind you and blows your head off with a semi-automatic, you will feel no pain either, nor will you be cognizant of your death.

ROE V. WADE was a great victory for the women's movement. It seemed to promote equality of opportunity for women in all their endeavors by freeing them from the burden of years of caring for children conceived unintentionally. But perhaps support for *Roe* v. *Wade* should be reconsidered in light of the damage wrought by the kind of behavior that has become common in a world in which pregnancy is no longer seen as the momentous beginning of a new life, and life, by extension, is no longer held as sacred.

At any rate, even if one rejects my speculation that *Roe* v. *Wade* has at least some indirect connection with the degree to which life on our streets has become so cheap, surely there can be no denying the direct connection between *Roe* v. *Wade* and the degree to which sex has become so casual. Surely, for example, *Roe* v. *Wade* will make it harder for my two daughters to grow gracefully into womanhood without being encouraged to think of sex as a kind of sport played with a partner who need feel no further responsibility toward them once the game is over.

For me, that is reason enough not to support this elevation of abortion to the status of a constitutional right.

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The Nuclear Bubble

Joseph Adelson

In June 1989 the press carried accounts of a project which had encouraged adolescents to write to Congress about the issues of most concern to them. Over 5,000 seventh- and eighth-graders had done so. The top seven issues mentioned were drugs (25 percent), sex (17 percent), the environment (10 percent), crime (7 percent), education (5 percent), child abuse (5 percent), and suicide (5 percent). Other issues adduced ranged from health care to helmet and skateboard laws.

An addicted reader of information on the young like myself was bound to note an extraordinary omission—there was no mention of nuclear warfare and how to avoid it. How could that be? After all, it had been drummed into us that the fear of a nuclear Armageddon was haunting the adolescent imagination. Indeed, less than a year before we had learned from the august *New England Journal of Medicine* that nuclear war was "one of the greatest concerns of American children and adolescents." The implications were said to be profound: in an accompanying guest editorial, a well-known professor of psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School declared that these apprehensions might well affect "impulse control and capacity to delay gratification, the formation of long-term ideals, the ability and willingness to form relationships, views of death, the capacity for intergenerational trust, the development of social responsibility, and interest in planning for the future." In short, just about everything.

Yet in under twelve short months, nuclear anxiety—supposedly all but ubiquitous in its reach and utterly malignant in its effects—had seemingly vanished, leaving few traces save some stray citations in *Psychological Abstracts* and *Excerpta Medica*. How can we account for this? A likely explanation is that the end of the cold war had a great deal to do with it. But if that is so, it would suggest that "nuclear terror" was no more than an ordinary source of worry, much as drugs are at the moment, and by no means the shattering trauma it was alleged to be—real traumas do not dissipate with every change in the headlines. An even more likely explanation is that there had never been a psychological crisis in the first place, that it had been invented as a vast exercise in self-deception—just another bubble, like the South Seas bubble and the Dutch-tulip craze. And if that is so, it tells us something unpleasant about the sciences of psychology and psychiatry in their traffic with political ideas.

Joseph Adelson is professor of psychology at the University of Michigan and the author of *Inventing Adolescence*, among other books. The present article, in a different version, will appear in *Social Science and Social Policy*, edited by Peter Suedfeld and Philip Tetlock, to be published later this year by Hemisphere Press.

I

My own interest in nuclear anxiety was first aroused unexpectedly some seven years ago when I was telephoned by a Minority aide to the House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families. The committee, she told me, had been established to study such problems as divorce, illegitimacy, domestic violence, child abuse, and other misfortunes besetting the American family. That was more than enough to exhaust the committee's time and energy. Yet the chairman had insisted on pushing through a special hearing for the purpose of showing that nuclear anxiety among the young was so severe as to constitute a national crisis in mental health. At this hearing it would be argued that our children were not only terrified by fears of a nuclear catastrophe, but that these fears were also a major cause of other afflictions—the rising rates of suicide, drug abuse, school failure, and so on. Some of the Republican members were upset, largely because the real work of the committee was to be delayed in order to put on a television event. Children were to testify, as were some celebrity psychiatrists. The television networks had been invited and it might well turn into a media circus.

She was calling to ask whether I agreed that the nation's young were in such a crisis. She herself thought the idea far-fetched. She had seen nothing untoward in her own children, nor among their friends. But then again she was not a psychologist, so perhaps was missing something. What did I think? What I thought, without telling her so, was that she had misunderstood or exaggerated the claims being made. But I said that I would do some checking and get back to her.

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Looking into the literature I discovered to my surprise that she had in no way been guilty of overstatement. It was in fact being claimed that the American young were in the grip of despair, induced by their fear of an inescapable nuclear calamity. Yet this conclusion, it appeared, had been reached almost gratuitously. It was based on an array of more or less inadequate studies—some entirely anecdotal, some amateurish, a few no more than passable technically, and as a group showing few signs of inferential prudence. In much of the work, the samples had been tendentiously chosen—the youngsters studied were all upper-middle-class and suburban, the seedbed of the peace movement. Nor were investigator effects taken into account, even though most of the early studies had been carried out by persons who were themselves deeply devoted to the movement.

These were the more obvious errors, most clearly visible in the clinical researches. The other common genre was the opinion survey, wherein youngsters were asked to write in or check off or rate their concerns or worries or fears. That would seem to be the most straightforward of approaches, yet it is not, and when used without sufficient guile can provide extremely misleading data. These studies, then and later, showed little awareness of how tricky it can be to measure complex or fugitive states of mind—being worried is not the same as being concerned or being fearful. Further, being worried may mean entirely different things to different children. Nor is merely saying that you are worried quite the same as the depth of worry that might reveal itself on a projective test. Nor was there much recognition of context effects—many children tend to view a survey taken at school as a current-events quiz, which would account for the surprisingly high frequency of worries about such matters as pollution, overpopulation, and world starvation.

STILL, the clinical studies were the most troublesome, given their casual and at moments reckless habits of inference. Clinical theory had taken a hard look at those habits in recent years, and had developed some doctrines of self-consciousness and caution. Yet none of that delicacy of touch could be perceived in the nuclear-anxiety literature. If the subject (interviewee, patient) was openly fearful, that made the case; if the subject feared something else, that was a derivative, and also made the case; if there were no signs of fear, that pointed to "psychic numbing," a concept which acted as a universal solvent to wash away all contradiction.

No wonder, then, that one writer, in an approving summation of the literature, could represent "the bomb" as "a major force behind increased apathy, conformity, hedonism, and lack of faith; the source of powerlessness, nervousness, sensationalism, alienation, and dehumanization; the creator of a weakness in the distinction between reality and unreality, information overload, psychic numbing, expectation of holocaust, rejection of materialism, rejection of technology and the religion of nuclearism."

Surely a terror so devastating would have been noticed by others. Yet I could find no references to nuclear panic outside the work of those engaged in the anti-nuclear movement. For example, in a fairly recent book reporting studies on childrens' ideas of death as depicted in their drawings, there was no allusion to nuclear disaster at all (despite the vivid iconographic properties of the mushroom cloud), and in fact there was scarcely any reference to death in war (fewer than 2 percent among those nine to twelve years of age). Surveying a dozen texts in child and adolescent psychology and psychiatry, I discovered that the topic simply did not appear. Even the fear of war was rare—among children of latency age it showed up in only 8 percent of the girls and was hardly mentioned by the boys.

One could easily imagine an advocate's rejoinder to these findings—that they were out of date, and that they did not penetrate deeply enough into the subterranean torments the new clinical research had uncovered. Yet the most compelling evidence against accepting the claims of nuclear terror was precisely its absence in *current* clinical observations. I detected no sign of it in my own clinical cases, or in those of my graduate interns, or in those of the young psychologists I supervised, or in the presentations at case conferences. Nor did my colleagues report it when questioned. Nor did the child and adolescent therapists I spoke to. I went so far as to examine all the process notes from the therapy supervisions I had done during the past year—about a thousand hours—and unearthed only one reference to nuclear matters, and that involved a patient talking about someone else. I gave special attention to fantasies and dreams, to see whether one could discern even faint derivatives of nuclear anxiety; they were not there.

Bear in mind that most of the patients were young adults, a group both vulnerable and *au courant*; and bear in mind, too, that the place was Ann Arbor, a leading suburb of Greater Academia, at a time (1983) when one could not stroll down its main campus street without being asked to sign a petition to make the city a nuclear-free zone, or avoid coming upon persons holding up large posters reading 500 FEET FROM GROUND ZERO and the like. Even so, there were no nuclear perturbations to be felt in psychotherapy. By way of contrast, at that very moment AIDS was just beginning to seep into public awareness, and yet *its* perturbations were almost immediately evident in psychotherapy, and not among homosexuals alone.

When we next talked, I told the Minority aide that in my opinion nuclear fears did not pose a threat to the mental health of the young: the data

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supporting that notion were flawed or nonexistent. I also offered to prepare a report to become part of the record of the hearings. After the hearings were over, she called to say that they had gone surprisingly well, meaning—as it turned out—that her side had broken even. The media coup she had feared did not quite come off. The child witnesses, though winsome and articulate, were so clearly atypical—fledgling members of the anti-nuclear culture—that they were not taken seriously as representative of children in general. The Majority's mental-health experts were effectively countered by the Minority's; there was a stand-off.

So ended the first chapter of this adventure. At the time I believed it would also be the last, since I could not see how the idea of nuclear anxiety could sustain itself, absent a serious conflict between the superpowers—something like the Cuban missile crisis, or worse—and there seemed no likelihood of that. Political disputes, national and international, about nuclear strategy would keep those issues prominent and "concern" high; but there was no reason to expect that they would induce terror, conscious or otherwise. And when that became evident, the anxiety about anxiety would diminish and the topic would fade from view.

II

So much for prescience. The doctrine I thought would soon be moribund was in fact at the beginning of a spurt which would produce an explosion of psychological writing. It was not to be an explosion of new thinking, however, only more—much more—of the same. Nevertheless, the rapid growth in quantity provided the illusion of quality, as the topic acquired committed authors and audiences. But I am getting ahead of the story.

Some months after the committee hearings, the transcript was published. To me it was discouraging, at moments appalling, for several reasons. The child witnesses were, I felt, being exploited, being displayed for effect alone, to drive home the motif of the suffering child which played so large a role in the imagery of the anti-nuclear movement. The children were willing to tell us that they were suffering, that they were haunted by the prospect of their imminent annihilation, yet we saw little if any evidence of that. We had, for example, a forceful twelve-year-old boy who lectured the graybeards assembled before him on Democritus and Newton and Einstein and on how to construct a nuclear weapon and why nuclear energy could not be used safely. What came to mind was not a picture of the terrified child but of the child-evangelist, a venerable American figure, preaching the gospel of hellfire and salvation.

Even more troubling was the nature of the psychiatric testimony. I had imagined that the *gravitas* of a congressional hearing would induce rhetorical restraint. And to be sure, there were the usual polite murmurs about preliminary findings and more research needed. But these served merely to launch even more astonishing assertions—e.g., that the recent interest in video games was a displacement from nuclear fears, or that working hard academically was "the only alternative to despair" about the world's blowing up. We were also offered the familiar mind-boggling clinical anecdotes—e.g., children of five and six expressing fears of nuclear destruction, and an eleven-year-old girl asking her parents "if she would have time to commit suicide" upon hearing that nuclear bombs were on their way.

But the most troubling element of the transcript was that it revealed so very clearly the root intention of the hearing, which was not merely to support the nuclear-freeze resolution circulating in those days, but also to pave the way for a national program of political education. The constant refrain was that the American young were being thwarted by a conspiracy of silence which kept them from learning the truth about our common nuclear peril. It was alleged that all discussion of the topic was taboo and that the effects of that taboo were poisonous—a building-up of doubt, desperation, despair, hopelessness, helplessness. Parents would not talk honestly to their children. Nor would the schools. And so the kids themselves were now demanding that the curtain be lifted and the truth be told.*

Lo and behold, programs of pedagogy were already in place and ready to meet this "demand." Curricular units on nuclear education had been developed by such powerful groups as the National Education Association (NEA), and were soon to be employed in thousands of schools. Shortly thereafter the leading journals of education—in concert—would devote entire issues to the need for such education. And at about the same time, several of the larger foundations announced that they would sponsor munificent programs of peace research and education.

The NEA's curriculum, *Choices*, apparently the most widely used, offered a heavy dose of shock treatment. Since nuclear psychiatry held that children were living in a state of denial, the syllabus depicted as gruesomely as possible the terrible damage occasioned by nuclear war. Children were invited to imagine, even forced to gaze upon, horrific pictures of devastation, and to read the most lurid tales of human suffering.

The other stated purpose of the curricula was pedagogic: to meet the supposed yearning of youngsters for more information on the nuclear impasse. There was an irony here—the very es-

* For additional details about these hearings, see "Terrorizing Children," by Chester E. Finn, Jr. and Joseph Adelson, Commentary, April 1985—Ed.

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tablishment which had presided over the collapse of American education was nevertheless prepared to teach the Byzantine complexities of arms control. Remember that most of our high-school seniors could not, on a four-part multiple-choice test, choose the five-year period during which D-day occurred, or when the United Nations was founded, and that only a bare majority knew the quarter-century of the Eisenhower or Roosevelt presidencies, or could identify Stalin as the Soviet ruler during World War II. How then were they to be instructed in world history and geopolitics?

Even a cursory scan of the major curricula made it plain that they were disingenuous exercises in indoctrination. The students were informed that there were two competing nuclear powers, with one (the United States) rather more to blame than the other. The U.S., it seemed, would not recognize how much the Russians had suffered, how beleaguered they felt, and how strong their interest in peace really was; Soviet efforts at conciliation were always rebuffed by us, leaving them little option but to continue an arms race they had no interest in (all this during the time the Afghanistan brutalities were being carried out). In some cases the nuclear curricula also trafficked in what could only be called weird ideas—for example, the notion that "the West" was disposed to violence because of its bloodthirsty religious tradition (Judeo-Christian), while the religions of the East were conducive to tranquility. This, in the face of the fact that the bloodiest massacres and genocides in the post-World War II period took place in the East—especially China and Cambodia.*

Even disconfirming contemporaneous events had little impact. Consider *The Day After* episode. That television play, dramatizing the aftermath of a nuclear exchange in a small American city, received enormous pre-showing publicity. Many in the anti-nuclear movement believed the program would trigger mass hysteria, because of the reservoir of hidden panic supposedly present among so many of our citizens. The belief was so strong that a national hotline was established, to offer reassurance and advice to the many psychiatric casualties expected. But then *The Day After* was shown, and everyone watching it was able to go to bed and awake the next morning with no outpouring of calls to the hotline, no increased activity at the emergency rooms, no rise in suicides—and no sign that the nuclear-anxiety psychiatrists had learned any lessons from their failure of prophecy.

III

On the contrary, if anything the nuclear issue became attractive to a great many more psychologists and psychiatrists. A bibliography published in 1985 reported about 750 items, and there would soon be many more in print. Nuclear psychology became a standard topic at the national conventions of the mental-health associations, though it must be said that the papers did not contribute much beyond a sense of outrage, usually by generalizing such exotic cases as an eight-year-old who threatened suicide to avoid nuclear death. (That child, or some equivalent, was becoming a stock figure of the movement, a kind of Little Nell.)

Nor did the more restrained voices offer anything new. A famous psychologist proposed a long list of suggestions, each and every one banal: talk to the students, create discussion groups, speak and write about the arms race for the general public, "encourage others to follow our example," etc., etc. Another instructed us in great detail that an all-out nuclear exchange would be a most unsettling event psychologically.

On the major question as well—nuclear anxiety among the young—there was heightened activity but little genuine progress. The opinion surveys were now more sophisticated in method, but they tended to yield different results depending on minor variations in phrasing. And even then, they sometimes stubbornly refused to confirm the claims of the movement. Thus, at a peak period of anti-nuclear publicity, one survey of 8,000 students (fifth and ninth grades) found "nuclear destruction" well down the list of worries, in fact twelfth behind the front-runners—school performance, one's looks, being liked, parental death, and how one's friends treated one. (This, of course, was taken as evidence of denial or psychic numbing.)

But even if nuclear fear had invariably been number one, we would still have remained unclear about its depth. Any number of catastrophes—local and planetary—can overtake us. If a person lives in earthquake country or on the edge of a volcano, his sense of the future should be affected; and yet unless there has been actual trauma, this does not seem to be the case. Why then should nuclear fear be any different? Peace psychiatry insisted that it was different, decisively so, different not only in degree but in essence; nuclear anxiety—so it was claimed—had generated unique psychological effects, above all nihilism and a sense of futurelessness so severe as to unhinge the average child. Was that true? The evidence was entirely anecdotal. Could a more exacting test be devised? It did not have to be the perfect test; all one needed was a modest study providing some elementary controls. But this need was simply not met.

A good example was the much-praised book by David S. Greenwald and Steven J. Zeitlin, *No Reason to Talk About It*, subtitled *Families Confront the Nuclear Taboo* (1987). It could not have

* For more detailed analyses of these curricula, see the excellent articles by André Ryerson in COMMENTARY, June 1986 ("The Scandal of 'Peace Education'") and Keith B. Payne and Jill Coleman in *Policy Review*, Fall 1987.

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had better credentials. Under the imprint of a most distinguished publishing house, it carried on its dust jacket ecstatic commendations by such household names as Karl Menninger. Yet it turned out to be almost a textbook case of how not to do a serious study. The writers, both specialists in family therapy, interviewed 25 families, discussing with them their reactions to a nuclear threat. There were the superficial trappings of systematic research—the interviews were videotaped and later transcribed—but that was about the size of it. For the rest, the book managed to repeat every error made in the early and presumably exploratory stages of work in the area. The investigators were dedicated members of the peace movement. The families studied were in no way chosen randomly, but found by word of mouth, or "networking," a clear majority of them political activists, many in the peace movement, with an even larger majority, 80 percent, being middle- to upper-middle-class in social status. There was no systematic interview format, and apparently no intention of making systematic comparisons.

Here, then, was one more caricature of disinterested inquiry. The work began not from hypothesis, not even from expectation, but from a fixed belief that, as one of the blurbs on the book jacket put it, "the American family is haunted by the nuclear specter." That being assumed, there seemed no need to discover whether it was in fact so, or for whom it was so, or when, or how that specter related to the many other specters of contemporary life. The task was to confirm and illustrate what was already known.

The inferential pattern discussed earlier obtained here as well. If a person was haunted by the specter, that made the case; if a person did not seem to be, denial and numbing were at work; if a person followed the adage of Sir Sydney Smith, to trust in God and take short views, a childlike passivity might be inferred. If there was not much talk about the specter at the dinner table, it meant that the children had not been "given permission" by the parents, and this in turn had interfered with "the struggle for mastery" and with "identity formation." On the parental side, the specter had destroyed the ability to guide the next generation, which amounted to "an assault on generativity." And so it went, every developmental crisis imagined by Erik Erikson being brought into play. It was research by asseveration, by the accumulation of selected interview excerpts—sound bites.

It is obvious that, employing the same premises, methods, and modes of inference, an equivalent case could be made for a great many other specters. Imagine a pair of scholars from the "Meryl Streep Institute" eager to show us that the American family is haunted by unavowed fears of carcinogens. They gather a group of largely upscale families and someone to run the camcorder, and set about finding out how much is known about the substances that befoul the air, the water, the food, and the earth itself—the pesticides, the toxic wastes, the acid rain. Some children will tell them that they know something about all this but not that much, and that they expect to die of cancer, since that is what everybody gets, though in the meantime they expect to go to the state university and study marketing. Others will say that they do not know what carcinogens are, since they have not yet come to the subject in their civics class. Some parents will confess that they are worried but have not yet discussed the problem with their kids since they do not really understand it. Other parents will say that they do not worry because the government would not let the problem get out of hand.

All the categories we need are already in place here: futurelessness, denial, psychic numbing, the childlike belief in government, parental powerlessness, the assault on generativity, and on and on.

Or take another example: abortion. Does anyone doubt that a compelling case could be made for abortion anxiety, or abortion guilt, given children pre-programmed by religious or politically conservative families, and given an investigator eager to make the case? Such an investigator would go about demonstrating the pandemic malevolence of abortion guilt by committing the elementary error of taking correlation to imply causation, assuming a connection between two events coincident in time.

It is precisely this rather simple mistake that pervades the nuclear-specter studies. Carried to its extreme it produces some startling examples—e.g., a researcher in organizational psychology asserts that the reason athletes have become so exhibitionistic (high fives, dancing in the end zone) is that "the specter of nuclear war and other overwhelming problems" causes them to feel helpless. In a further extension of this fallacy, all events are conditioned by their being part of the Nuclear Age. I recently came upon an essay discussing Anna O., the first psychoanalytic patient. In speculating on what she might be like if she were a patient today, the author twice speaks of "Anna O. in the Nuclear Age." But what does the Nuclear Age have to do with Anna O.? Why not the Biogenetic Age, the Computer Age, the Age of Space Travel, the Audio-Visual Age, or for that matter the Anorexic Age, or the Psychobabble Age, or the Age of Abortion?

IV

Nuclear psychology is the worst example we have had so far of a more general problem in psychology: the erosion of the boundary between ideology and disinterested research. In other instances politics biases the work, tilts it, by a variety of not quite conscious devices—through the samples chosen, the questions

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asked, the methods used, the inferences made. In the case of nuclear psychology the topic itself seemed created to serve political aims; it was politics masquerading as psychology. Just as distressing was the near unanimity of opinion. Of the hundreds of articles written by and addressed to psychiatrists and psychologists, only a handful voiced discordant views, and even those were not often heard.

The absence of dissent may lift the spirits momentarily but sooner or later it deadens thought. Inanition sets in. And so it was that professional gatherings on nuclear psychology soon became rallies, revival meetings, prayer services.

To the self-indulgence produced by the absence of opposition, there was added the self-indulgence permitted by clinical modes of inquiry. The free and easy means of discovery and proof we see throughout this body of work provides—to the lifelong clinician—a truly depressing confirmation of the critiques of psychoanalysis advanced by Adolf Grünbaum, Frederick Crews, and many others. Discovery: seek and ye shall find; proof: right you are if you think you are. The solipsistic temptations of the clinical method were too easily realized; the disinterest hard enough to obtain under ordinary conditions of clinical work disappeared completely.

Episodes such as these take their toll in the form of squandered credibility. Among sophisticated audiences—among journalists, legislators, jurists, natural scientists—one can discern a growth of skepticism, not merely about this or that theory or about specific findings, but about the entire enterprise of psychological research. To some degree this reflects the recognition that psychology so often exceeds its grasp, that it does not have the means to answer really difficult or complex questions. Yet a more important reason may be the suspicion that were it able to answer those questions, it would not do so in good faith. It would load the dice. Bias in, bias out. There are too many instances where findings dovetail much too neatly with ideological interests. Conversely, we have had unpleasant findings evaded or denied, and—worse yet—we have had scholars penalized for making such findings.

Is it any wonder, then, that many observers have come to view psychiatrists and psychologists as they do lawyers—as nothing more than advocates, hired guns, even if procurable not by money but by the love of a cause?

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Race Fever

Edward Alexander

AMERICAN universities are aflame with race fever. Official committees on "racism and cultural diversity," departmental commissioners of moral sanitation, and freelance vigilantes are in a state of high alert for signs (real or alleged) of "racism." Their Argus-eyes maintain unrelaxing surveillance of statistical charts documenting failure to meet racial quotas in hiring and enrollment, of verbal insults by "white" students against "people of color," and of classroom remarks by professors imprudent enough either to risk generalization about a group *or* to declare that generalizations about groups tell us nothing about individuals.

Such diligence rarely goes unrewarded. Since many American campuses have "populations" larger than hundreds of American cities, it is hardly remarkable that incidents of behavior less than saintly, including racial harassment, should occur. What is remarkable is the way in which such incidents are now regularly exploited by political opportunists, people Joseph Epstein has labeled "the intellectual equivalent of ambulance-chasers." A few instances should suffice to illustrate the general pattern.

At Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas earlier this year, a freshman was "reported to university officials" for singing "We Shall Overcome" in a "sarcastic manner" during a late-night dormitory discussion. The campus was still vibrating from this shocking violation of the school's "racial-harassment rules" when it learned of a still more flagrant one, in which a white graduate student "was reported for calling a Hispanic classmate a Mexican in a derogatory manner after an intramural football game." Although the student whom the New York *Times* dubbed "the victim" of the slur received an immediate apology from the culprit, apology was also demanded, and received, by the university's judicial board and then by its "intercultural affairs office." But since Big Brother (very much like his omnipresent Big Sister, ever watchful for sexism) is not easily placated, this triune apology had to be supplemented by penance in the form of thirty hours of community service to minority organizations in Dallas.

In 1986 SMU had established a course called "Black and White." Its purpose was, as one satisfied student enrolled in it declared, to teach that "whites must be sensitive to the African-American community rather than the other way around." Sensitivity traffic is heavy, but it flows in only one direction. Any suggestion that members of a formerly despised and mistreated group may be capable of wrongdoing is punished with utmost severity. "The spirit of improvement," wrote John Stuart Mill in a famous understatement, "is not always a spirit of liberty."

There is only one sense in which these courses in sensitivity training conform to old-fashioned ideas about liberal education: their main purpose seems to be to ventilate the moral sensibilities or, if I may change my metaphor, to flex the moral muscles in an imaginary gymnasium rather than to put one in touch with the truth about the actual world. At Emory University in Atlanta, a black student gained national attention in March when she reported several incidents of racial harassment, including the ransacking of her dormitory room, the scrawling of racial slurs on its walls, and the receipt of death threats in the mail. These threats, so Sabrina Collins alleged, caused her to curl into a fetal ball and to lose the power of speech. But by June, local prosecutors reviewing the case concluded that it was all a hoax, and that the only Emory student who participated in the harassment of Sabrina Collins was Sabrina Collins herself. Her imagination, it seems, had been fueled by an eagerness to impede an inquiry into suspicions that she had cheated in a chemistry class. This fiasco, however, did nothing to dampen the zeal of those who had been lashing the university authorities for their failure to combat the racism that had victimized Collins. "It doesn't matter . . . whether she did it or not," said the president of the Atlanta chapter of the NAACP, "because of all the pressure these black students are under at these predominantly white schools. If this will highlight it, if it will bring it to the attention of the public, I have no problem with that." No problem, that is, with falsehood, with fraud, or with the doctrine that members of an oppressed group are incapable of doing wrong.

EDWARD ALEXANDER is professor of English at the University of Washington. His latest book is *Isaac Bashevis Singer: A Study of the Short Fiction* (G.K. Hall).

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Innocents who wander into these modern Salems will quickly discover the profound truth of Abigail M. Thernstrom's description of the universities and colleges as "islands of repression in a sea of freedom." In the 1970 revised edition of *Beyond the Melting Pot*, a study of race and ethnicity in New York City, Daniel P. Moynihan and Nathan Glazer wrote that "Race has exploded to swallow up all other distinctions, or so it would appear at the moment." Yet even Senator Moynihan must have been surprised by the incendiary effect of his saying to the students of Vassar College, in a February lecture, that "the United States of America provides a model of a reasonably successful multiethnic society." The blundering ear of the Vassar thought police heard Moynihan say that the U.S. was "a model of ethnic cooperation," and construed this alleged remark to be racist. For good measure they alleged (and Moynihan denied) that he had told a Dutchess County (N.Y.) official who is from Jamaica to go back to that country if he didn't like the U.S.

As is often the case in such incidents, what actually happened was far less important than the keen desire of the race-obsessed witchhunters to exploit what was *alleged* to have happened. Leaders of the Black Student Union at Vassar demanded an apology from the college administration for the remarks they themselves had foisted on Moynihan and his removal from the Eleanor Roosevelt professorship, under which rubric he had given his lecture. As the handbook of student activism clearly states that bullying, however satisfying to the militant spirit, must never be its own reward, small wonder that demands soon were also made for the establishment of a task force on racism, for the creation of a black student center, for the opening of an intercultural center, and for bountiful provision of the other desiderata of progressive race-thinking. Students who declined to join the demonstration, even if they supported its demands, were denounced by its leaders as—surprise!—racists too. One of these leaders announced, with touching candor, that he and his fellow tribunes had for some time been seeking a way to bend the college administration to their will: "This was the perfect catalyst."

To witness an outbreak of race fever at first hand is to have an experience, not soon forgotten, of just how lethal is the mixture of aspirants to victim status with pretenders to guilt, who compound for sins they are inclined to by damning those they have no mind to.

The University of Washington in Seattle, with 34,000 students and over 2,500 faculty, is one of the largest on the West Coast. It has had considerable experience of spectacular confrontations over the issue of race. In March 1970 the Black Student Union and the Seattle Liberation Front (led by the future editor of *Tikkun*, Michael Lerner, and described by then Washington State Attorney General—now U.S. Senator—Slade Gorton as an organization "totally indistinguishable from fascism and Nazism") accused the university of complicity in racism because it refused to cancel an athletic competition with Brigham Young University, a Mormon school. A mob composed of members of these two organizations and their followers invaded six university buildings, brutally beating over a dozen instructors and students who disobeyed the order to strike. Nowadays far greater results can be achieved with less arduous methods.

Like any university that cherishes its credentials as a progressive institution, Washington encourages its administrators to search out manifestations of racism and use them as occasions for reeducation of staff and faculty. In my own department (English), in March 1989, the chairman, after diplomatically settling an altercation between a white secretary and a black one, urged us all to attend a program on "Exploring Diversity," in which the campus Office of Human Rights would enlighten us respecting the "new consciousness about diversity, about the changing demography of our institution and our society." His memo was positive in tone, and avoided all denunciation. This, it turned out, was a colossal error. He was immediately "reprimanded" by unnamed "colleagues" for the "indirect, insensitive" language of his memo—the insensitivity consisting, of course, in his failure to brandish the talisman of "racism." Instead of throwing said colleagues out of his office with a warning never to return again, my chairman at once sent out a much longer memo, which thanked the censorious colleagues for revealing to him his own "insensitivity," mentioned "racism" repeatedly, and apologized profusely for the use of "language that encourages just the kind of action that resulted in the need for this meeting." Again, even more insistently than before, he urged everyone to attend the scheduled "workshop." (Wasn't it Kingsley Amis who said that "If there's one word that sums up everything that's gone wrong since the war, it's Workshop"?)

It soon turned out, however, that this departmental unpleasantness was but a local skirmish in a larger struggle. On May 3, 1989, William P. Gerberding, president of the university, stepped on a mine while addressing an awards dinner for minority students. He made a very small "ethnic" joke while conferring the Hispanic American Recognition Award on a student in civil engineering. Perhaps, jested Gerberding, the student had acquired his interest in the highway system while "driving down the highway at 70 mph in the middle of the night to keep ahead of immigration authorities."

The honoree "didn't know if I should take it as a joke or not." But he soon received guidance from higher authority. The organization of Chi-

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cano students (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan, or MECHA), when it learned of the joke, informed the student that he certainly *ought* to have been offended. Ernesto Sandoval, the "Commissioner" of MECHA, summoning the indignation worthy of his title, complained that the university "had done nothing about this" and declared that an offense of such enormity could not be committed with impunity. He also stoked the fire of his wrath by remembering, now, that a year earlier Gerberding had publicly urged university students to work hard to keep pace with the Japanese—an obviously racist use of "the yellow peril."

Within a few hours, Sandoval had received a letter of apology from President Gerberding. But the letter was deemed "unsatisfactory" because it was insufficiently contrite and self-abasing. Gerberding said he would "try again." But again he failed: apology number two, though it amplified number one by heaping praise on the whole Hispanic population, still failed to utter the magical term "racism." Besides, it was not a *public* apology: "If he offended our community in public," said the Commissioner, "then he can apologize to us in public."

Ever willing to try harder, Gerberding agreed to apologize, now for the third time, at a public forum to be held in the aptly named Red Square in the center of the campus. He also consented to participate in a seminar especially designed for administrators found to be inadequately endowed with "ethnic and racial sensitivity." But if Gerberding thought that confessing to racism and agreeing to reeducation had opened the way to absolution, he was soon to be disillusioned. The 200 students (out of 34,000) who assembled to pass judgment on him were in no mood to be merciful.

GERBERDING recited nearly all the banalities his tormentors wanted to hear. He announced that the university's true purpose is "the celebration of diversity," which he defined (just as his audience does) entirely in racial terms: "Diversity includes all of you folks out in front of me, white, black, all in betweens." Like them, he took it as self-evident truth that mind is a function of physiology, that the apparent fruits of intellect actually originate in genetics, and that all people belonging to a particular ethnic group either are, or should be, of one mind and will. Therefore, if you want intellectual diversity, you need a racial recipe that mixes "white, black, [and] all in betweens" in exact proportion to their presence in the general population.

Meanwhile, the assembled embodiments and celebrants of diversity were alternately heckling and chanting, in metronomically monotonous unison, the inspiring verses: "Hey, hey! Ho, ho! Racism has got to go!" Their collective toothbaring, their will to offend, to bully, to humiliate, comported oddly with the image of victim they so passionately claimed for themselves. Furthermore, however pleased the demonstrators might have been by Gerberding's instinctive compliance with the psychology of abdication, they wanted something tangible. As one smarmy, self-righteous lout at the front of the mob put it: "Since you can publicly admit your insensitivities and shortcomings toward people of color and racial issues, we expect your support of the Ethnic Studies Requirement as a sign of your new awareness and of our needs." Campus bullies, like Middle Eastern terrorists, hold to the conviction that no bad deed of theirs should go unrewarded.

For a year, a faculty-student Task Force on Ethnicity had been assessing a proposal that would compel every student at the University of Washington to devote one-quarter of the Humanities and Social Science credits required for a bachelor's degree to Ethnic Studies courses. The ideal (if not the actual) purpose of such courses would be to "sensitize" the American majority toward this country's minority groups and to build a curricular bulwark against the omnipresent evil of racism. But since Gerberding did not have the authority to force the hand of the committee, the anti-racism struggle now shifted to the final deliberations of the group, which the demonstrators were urged to attend (and to influence).

Whether it was by accident or by the intervention of invisible powers, I entered the spectators' gallery of the crucial meeting just as the committee, which had already been in session for an hour, began to consider the Jewish question. Other "white" groups, such as Italian and Irish Americans, had, I learned, been denied most-favored-minority status at an earlier stage of the committee's deliberations. Now it was the turn of the Jews to be measured. Are the Jews a minority in this country? Is anti-Semitism a form of racism? Hardly abstruse questions, one might suppose; and yet they aroused intense debate. The students, representing African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Chicano/Latino Americans—otherwise known as the "major" minorities—unanimously opposed the inclusion of Jews and anti-Semitism in the Ethnic Studies curriculum. They seemed genuinely bemused by the idea that people not in their political party should have the temerity to invade their turf and poach on the (very considerable) spoils of their anticipated victory. Their recommended solution—eventually approved by the committee—was to substitute the term "people of color" for the term "minorities" wherever it appeared in committee documents.

The prize for semantic juggling was won not by the students, however, but by the two professorial representatives of the Ethnic Studies program itself, both of whom have also presided over Afro-American Studies. Professor Joseph Scott could not assent to the inclusion of Jews and anti-Semitism in the proposed scheme of courses unless

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other "Semitic" peoples, most particularly the Palestinian Arabs, were also included. Professor Johnella Butler also opposed inclusion of Jews because Jewish persons are not necessarily of "Semitic descent" and "anti-Semitism is not institutionalized in the country."

These remarks brought a raising of the collective eyebrow and even some tittering. For it appeared that of the 37,000 who teach and learn at the University of Washington, the only ones ignorant of the fact that anti-Semites hate Jews and not "Semites" were the professors of Ethnic Studies, the officially designated historians and exorcists of racism. Some uncharitable observers, to be sure, suspected that if you touched the delicate, exotic fruit of this professorial ignorance, it would quickly lose its bloom and turn out to be not so much ignorance of the history as guilt of the sin of racism. Could the spiteful introduction of Palestinian Arabs into a discussion of American minorities be innocent? Could the assertion by a grown-up and heavily degreed woman that institutional anti-Semitism (as if that were the only kind) is absent from this country be indicative less perhaps of a susceptibility to balderdash than of a desire to make up for that absence? The more closely one observes the actions and the moral temper of the leaders of the campus campaign against racism all across this country, the more urgently does the old adage "Physician, heal thyself" rise to one's lips.

It is hardly a secret that a majority of the more assiduous practitioners of progressive race-thinking at the universities define themselves as Marxists. At first glance this might seem surprising, because Marxism traditionally sought to explain everything by the material motives of class and property, not biology. But Marxism, as Jacques Barzun and Gertrude Himmelfarb have pointed out, is itself essentially racist in form and effect, depending as it does on a depiction of the bourgeois as, in Barzun's words, "not a human being with individual traits, but a social abstraction, a creature devoid of virtue or free will and without the right to live."

The collapse of the Marxist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe, the embarrassing fact that the first truly working-class revolution in history has been made (by Solidarity) against a *socialist* government, may have dulled the luster of economic determinism; but they have not extinguished the deep-seated modern desire to reduce human spirit and culture to matter. "Drive out nature with a fork," says Horace, "nevertheless she will continually return." With a little job retraining, yesterday's economic determinist becomes today's race (and "gender") determinist, seeking in physical origin and genes the key to mind, and excoriating colleagues who, in the already immortal words of Harvard's Derrick Bell, "look black and think white."

It is a sorry irony that "celebration of diversity" has become the slogan of self-proclaimed reformers of an institution called the university, a word whose origin and ideal meaning suggest that many parts have been "turned into one"—*universum*. If, as we still have good reason to believe, humanity is an infinitely varied repetition, then people of many groups, of diverse backgrounds, of a thousand dispositions can, if they practice tolerance and self-restraint, communicate with each other through the vehicle of mind. The university, in its ideal character, is predicated on the assumption that values which originate in the self or the group or the nation can be extradited and made available to those who share with the originators nothing except the human status. It aspires to Matthew Arnold's ideal of disinterestedness, the free play of the mind, unhampered by sect or party, over "the best that has been thought and said in the world."

That our universities have failed to achieve the perfection of this nobly inclusive ideal, no one should deny. But will turning it on its head in favor of the superstition that members of particular groups have one mind and live solely for a political purpose really extend cultural choice and individual rights? Do we really want our universities to become training schools for prigs and Pecksniffs who pride themselves on the ability to spot racism at a distance of twenty miles, who choose their professorial "role models" according to race, and who scan their reading lists for proportional representation by race, "gender," and class, but who can no longer fathom the meaning and implication of Wordsworth's definition of the poet as "a man speaking to men"?

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In Poland Again

Maurice Friedberg

I HAD long hesitated to return for a visit to Poland, though it is the land of my birth and that of my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. In fact, my Polish-Jewish lineage probably extends as far back as the 16th or 17th century, before the acquisition by Poland's Jews of family names. Naturally my information about this earlier period is very sketchy. What I do know for sure is that both my mother's and my father's families were neither wealthy nor destitute. They owned small stores and village mills and ran pubs for Polish landowners; my father had a modest lumberyard. Nor did either branch of my family produce any illustrious rabbis. Ordinary devout Jews, they were faithful followers of the Galician hasidic *rebbe* of Belz.

I left Poland at the age of sixteen, in 1946, a year after the end of the war (but before the Communists had taken over), and only several weeks after the July 4 pogrom in Kielce in which 42 Jewish survivors of the Holocaust were murdered. As time went on, my Polish remained fluent, and I became a teacher of Slavic literatures. I thus had good professional grounds for a return visit, but never made one, partly because of specifically Jewish qualms, and partly for political reasons. For decades I had been periodically attacked in the Soviet press (and occasionally also in Eastern Europe) as a "reactionary warmonger" whose "pseudo-scholarly" writings—to say nothing of broadcasts over the Voice of America and Radio Liberty—were a "quasi-academic dimension of nefarious activities of the CIA and the Pentagon." I even had an unofficial "biographer" in Moscow who systematically recorded my evil activities.

And then, forty-four years after my departure from postwar Cracow, came an invitation from the University of Lodz. Poland was no longer a "People's Republic"; an ambassador from Israel had just presented his credentials to the non-Communist government in Warsaw; also, I had just turned sixty. If I was ever to see Poland again, this was clearly the time.

Sunday, May 27, 1990

LODZ, Poland's second largest city, with a population exceeding a million, does not even appear on standard tourist itineraries. Built largely in the 19th century, it boasts no famous historical landmarks and is not very attractive in appearance. Prior to World War I, it was imperial Russia's Manchester, and textiles manufactured in Lodz were sold even in Central Asia.

Before World War II, Lodz had a very large Jewish population, about a quarter of a million, one-third of the city's total, much of it destitute and Yiddish-speaking. But the Jewish community also had its textile tycoons as well as an assimilated Polish-speaking intelligentsia whose best-known representative was Julian Tuwim, one of modern Poland's great poets. Irreverent, satirical, and "unpatriotic," Tuwim bears some resemblance to Heinrich Heine. The refusal in Germany even today to acknowledge Heine as a truly German poet has its counterpart in the ambivalence with which Tuwim's legacy is treated in Poland. Still, in Lodz I come upon a modest monument to the city's arguably most famous native son (and, some days later, in a Cracow theater, I will be seeing an excellent cabaret-style performance of Tuwim's verse).

Everywhere in the world, except in Israel, Sunday is the best day to visit a Jewish cemetery. There is one in Lodz, and, as a sign informs, thanks to the generosity of the Nussenbaum Family Foundation in Western Europe, the cemetery's upkeep is reasonably satisfactory, although the monument to the city's martyred Jews has obviously been vandalized. I meet three people at the cemetery, an elderly Yiddish-speaking man in an old military cap (visitors are requested to cover their heads) and a young couple who speak only Polish. The young man wears a large homemade *yarmulke*. There are now some 200 Jews in Lodz, he tells me, most of them retirees, with fewer than a dozen young people. Services are held in the synagogue on High Holy Days, and sometimes on other occasions—such as when foreigners visit.

I pass some recent graves and a number of tombstones erected after the war to commemorate victims of the Holocaust. Among older graves a large mausoleum now undergoing repair serves as the resting place of the family of the textile magnate Poznanski. Among the Hebrew and Polish inscriptions, I notice one in the Cyrillic script. It is the grave of Roza Deweltow, born in Vilna in 1919, killed in action in 1944 at age twenty-five. The Russian inscription reveals that she was posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, the equivalent of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Monday, May 28

FOOD is abundant in Lodz, if costly to a Polish wage earner, and there

MAURICE FRIEDBERG is *Senior University Scholar at the University of Illinois. His* How Things Were Done in Odessa, *a study of the city's cultural and religious life, is forthcoming from Westview Press.*

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are about a dozen daily newspapers. I opt for Solidarity's *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which is edited by Adam Michnik, one of the union's intellectuals who spent years in Communist Polish jails. The son of a steadfast Communist, Michnik is currently one of only two "persons of Jewish origin" (a favorite Polish locution perceived, for some reason, as a euphemism) active in political life. (The other is Bronislaw Geremek, a historian and a convert to Catholicism, now chairman of the Civil Parliamentarian Group in the Polish Senate.) Some people half-jokingly suggest that I read the venerable Communist-party daily *Trybuna Ludu* instead of *Gazeta Wyborcza* because opposition newspapers are more trustworthy than those sponsored by the establishment.

A friend's contacts enable us to visit a monastery. The monks there are overwhelmingly young, many well-educated. Indeed, throughout my visit I will be struck by how young the priests, monks, and nuns are in the country, as well as by the large number of Roman Catholic churches under construction, by the throngs of people attending services even on weekdays, and by groups of boys and girls singing hymns at roadside chapels. Some of this is strictly religious, but clearly the Church is also still perceived as the repository of the national spirit, its traditional function in occupied Poland. Time will tell whether this extraordinary attachment will continue now that Poland is truly independent again after a hiatus of half a century.

The new liberal spirit in Poland also appears to have given encouragement to religious minorities. Within several days I am to see Byelorussian Orthodox churches (and also an Orthodox convent—with young nuns) in the vicinity of Bialystok in Eastern Poland near the Soviet frontier. And a chambermaid in Lodz confides in me that she is a Jehovah's Witness. Until recently, she says, her co-religionists were reviled in the press as American agents who were receiving money and copies of *Watchtower* from Brooklyn. But things, she adds, are much better now.

Some 4,000 Jews remain in Poland, almost exactly one-tenth of 1 percent of the country's prewar Jewish population, but they continue to figure prominently in the nation's consciousness. In an agricultural school near Zdunska Wola, about a three-hour drive from Lodz, I see wooden dolls of bearded Jews in hasidic garb. The dolls have been made by local children who, needless to say, have never laid eyes on a Jew. I am to see similar dolls in Warsaw where they are manufactured, it seems, for Polish customers as well as for the tourist trade, as are metal Stars of David, and paintings of the tablets of the Ten Commandments.

Tuesday, May 29

IN KEEPING with traditional Polish hospitality, the lunch in a schoolteacher's home is plentiful, rather fancy, and obviously far too expensive for a hostess whose husband, an engineer, works only part-time and is in danger of being laid off altogether.

Inflation, together with job insecurity, is viewed by some as a sinister plot on the part of the Communists to bring down the current government and seize power once again. Actually, the reasons are much simpler. Grotesquely obsolete machinery (some of the looms in Lodz's textiles factories are said to be close to a hundred years old) and the near-total destruction of the work ethic during the decades of Communist rule have resulted in industrial products that are simultaneously low in quality and high in price. While Poland was a People's Republic, these shoddy goods were bartered for raw materials from the USSR and the other Soviet satellites. Now, however, they cannot compete on the world market with the cheaper and better-quality output of South Korea or Hong Kong. Analogous problems bedevil the country's agriculture, although it must be emphasized that the situation is far better here than in the Soviet Union. Poland's peasants were never collectivized and are willing to work hard.

Both industry and agriculture desperately need foreign investment in order to modernize. Yet investors cannot easily be attracted to a country that already owes close to $40 billion, roughly $1,000 per capita, children included. Things are grim, everybody agrees, but in the meantime how about another shot of vodka?

This is my last evening in Lodz, and one of my hosts presents me with two books as a farewell gift. One is Jerzy Ficowski's Polish translation of Itzhak Katzenelson's epic Yiddish poem, *The Song of the Murdered Jewish People* (the translator's dedication reads, "To our brothers, Polish Jews, on the 40th anniversary of their battle in the Warsaw Ghetto"). The other is Maria Brzezina's *Polszczyzna Zydow*, a massive linguistic study of the dialect that was once spoken by the country's unassimilated Jews—for an American counterpart, think of a scholarly investigation into the idiosyncrasies of Black English. In bookstores, incidentally, one finds quite a few items of Judaica, for the most part Polish translations of recent Western academic works in philosophy and history, but also such curiosities as a West German book on the cuisine of Poland's Jews and a recording of Hebrew and Yiddish songs.

Wednesday, May 30

TODAY is the Jewish holiday of Shavuot. Instead of attending services, I am in Auschwitz.

Now that the bitter clash between the Jews and Cardinal Glemp, the Polish Catholic Primate, over the location of a convent appears to have been resolved, all is quiet in Auschwitz. There are busloads of tourists from Western Europe, and in company with a large group of Polish schoolchildren I watch a Soviet documentary (with a Polish soundtrack) of the concentration camp on the day of liberation. Although Jews from all over Europe, and first and foremost from Poland proper, constituted a large majority of the camp's inmates, only one of the scores of barracks specifically commemo-

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rates their martyrdom and resistance. A continuous recording of the memorial prayer, *El male rahamim*, resounds in this barrack, a few Israel-made memorial candles flicker on the floor.

Cracow is only an hour or so by car. Outwardly, the city has not changed much since my departure in 1946, only the traffic is much heavier and the buildings look dirty because of the smoke belching from the chimneys of neighboring Nowa Huta. I am on my way to meet a distant cousin I have not seen in forty-four years, the last relative still in Poland. He is eighty now, retired from his job as a bookkeeper. Together with his son, an unemployed engineer, my cousin takes me on a guided tour of the remnants of Jewish Cracow. Several buildings are still recognizable as old synagogues. There is also a still functioning synagogue and a small but attractive museum of Judaica.

We then visit the cemetery where his father is buried. On Sundays, my cousin walks to this cemetery to perform his regular *mitzvah* of reciting Hebrew prayers for the dead for visitors unable to do it themselves. But who will say the prayers for him when the time comes? Both of his children are married to Catholics, and most of Cracow's Jews are not much younger than himself.

Friday, June 1

WE START at dawn for Rzeszow, the city where I was born, and Jaroslaw, where I spent my childhood. Along the way we pass hundreds of reasonably prosperous-looking small farms, but we are told that their appearance is deceptive. In addition to facing problems similar to those in industry, Poland's farmers fear the disappearance of fixed prices for agricultural products.

The road signs recall names familiar from family legends—Przeworsk, Lancut, Sieniawa. We pass Mielec, where I had an uncle before the war, and Kolbuszowa, a small town where other relatives lived. I remember Kolbuszowa best because once in New York my father served as president of a Kolbuszowa *landsmanshaft* (which also still owns a cemetery plot in Queens) and we used to attend the Kolbuszower *shul* on the Lower East Side.

We stop in the tiny village of Radomysl Wielki (the "great") from which my wife's grandfather emigrated to America, the *goldene medine*, a century ago, and in Rzeszow I find a grimy building which I remember as having been a shiny modern house. I explain to an unfriendly shopkeeper that my grandfather once owned that house, and that I was born in a wooden annex which has since been razed. Several times we look for directions, but there are very few policemen because, as my driver, himself a former policeman, explains, the recent dismantling of the Communist secret police has resulted also in the demoralization of the regular police force. Thousands of patrolmen have resigned from the force, with the predictable consequence of a very steep rise in ordinary crime. Scores of people, in fact, have warned us against thieves, particularly pickpockets, in public places.

Close to Radomysl Wielki is the city of Tarnow. A small Jewish community existed there even after the war, but was driven away by a hostile population. Only a Jewish cemetery remains. The cemetery looks frightening. There are tall weeds of poison ivy, smashed and overturned tombstones with worms crawling on them, and broken bottles—remnants, no doubt, of drunken parties. Unfortunately, Tarnow's abandoned and vandalized cemetery is typical of Jewish cemeteries of Poland. Those of Lodz and Cracow are exceptions.

While Rzeszow is now a major industrial center, Jaroslaw has not grown much. The marketplace is much as I remember it from before the war, except that not a single Jew remains in the town. Instead of Yiddish, I hear Romanian and Ukrainian. Unbelievable though it may seem, to Romanians and to Soviet citizens Poland is a prosperous country, and they come here to sell rugs and painted wooden dolls.

I have no difficulty finding the house where I once lived. One elderly woman even correctly identifies my old apartment, while another confides that the prewar Jewish landlord's granddaughter visited the house some years ago to recover the family's gold and precious stones that had been buried in the basement. Stories of surviving Jews coming to dig up hidden treasures are so common in Poland that they should qualify as a folklore motif.

As we are leaving Jaroslaw, I notice a wall covered with graffiti. One inscription reads *Zydzi do gazu*—"Jews to the gas chamber." Next to it, however, someone has written, "Out with the racists." My driver asks me to remember that since there are no Jews in Jaroslaw, *both* inscriptions are the work of Poles, presumably young ones. The problem of anti-Semitic graffiti is, apparently, quite pervasive. An article in *Gazeta Wyborcza* has reported that Czeslaw Milosz, the Nobel Prize-winning Polish poet who now resides in Berkeley, was shaken by such inscriptions on a recent visit.

The one Polish institution that could combat this resurgence of anti-Semitic moods is obviously the Catholic Church. It alone has the moral standing, it alone commands enough influence. Yet not only does the Church desist from any such activity, it occasionally contributes to fanning the flames of anti-Semitism.

Some months ago the émigré Polish monthly *Kultura* reported that virulently anti-Semitic sermons were heard during the conflict over the convent at Auschwitz. And after a lecture I am to give at the Club of the Catholic Intelligentsia (KIK) in Warsaw, a young red-bearded Jew will rise to say that he personally attended a recent meeting in a local church at which the priest delivered a venomous attack on the "perfidious" Jews, referring to them by the highly insulting term *gudlaje*. The young man will give the date of the meeting, the name of the priest, and the exact location of the church. The audience at the club will remain silent. There will be no expressions of disapproval.

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Sunday, June 3

ON OUR first day in Warsaw, a small item on the front page of *Gazeta Wyborcza* announces that the law abolishing censorship is going into effect that very day. Facetiously, the newspaper expresses its sympathies to bereaved censors. Actually, one would be hard-pressed to detect any evidence of censorship in the bookstores or kiosks except for a relative absence of erotica. Previously taboo works of anti-Communist émigrés are freely available, and there is a proliferation of books on the crimes of the Stalin era.

The Warsaw Ghetto memorial is deserted, though a few faded flowers attest to recent visitors. We linger for half an hour, and meet three persons who together symbolize the status of Jews in Poland. One is a local old Yiddish-speaking Jew. The others are two young El Al stewardesses from a plane transporting Soviet Jews to Israel. (Poland's government will soon reject Arab protests and reaffirm its policy of providing Soviet Jews with a transit point in Warsaw.)

In the evening, the Artistic Ensemble of the Polish Armed Forces gives a rousing performance in Warsaw's largest theater. The program begins with the rendition of a medieval religious hymn. Predictably, martial and patriotic songs and dances predominate. To commemorate Polish soldiers who fought in the Allied armies during World War II, performers in British and French uniforms sing a medley of French songs and "It's a Long Way to Tipperary." The Russians receive no equal billing. In fact, they receive no billing at all.

Tuesday, June 5

THERE are long lines at Warsaw's Royal Castle, which was rebuilt after the war. An exhibition of some of the world's best religious painting is a strong attraction, and there is a palpable sense of gratitude to Barbara Piasecka-Johnson, who has underwritten the costs. At the same time, there is disappointment and some bitterness. Barbara Piasecka's is a modern Polish Cinderella story. Like thousands of her impoverished countrymen, she emigrated to America some years ago to seek her fortune. Unlike most, she did acquire a fortune by marrying an heir to the Johnson & Johnson pharmaceuticals firm. There were rumors for a time that she would use some of her multimillion-dollar legacy to bail out the shipyard of Gdansk. She did not, and the exhibit of religious art is apparently meant to serve as a consolation.

Today's newspaper advertises a lecture on "What It Is Like to Be a Jew in Poland" at the Club of the Catholic Intelligentsia by Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising of 1943 and the only one to have remained in Poland. Arriving, I find the club packed, with people standing in the corridor. But Edelman never shows up. (He never calls, either, very likely because he could not reach Warsaw by phone, a common enough problem.) Since none of the four or five Jews in attendance agrees to substitute for him, I am asked to improvise on the subject of Poland and Polish Jews, as seen from America.

After my presentation, I am bombarded with questions from the audience that are really brief, and sometimes not very brief, speeches. Do I know that 80 percent of the Communist Polish secret police were Jews? ("Only two-thirds," someone interjects.) Is it true that the Talmud sanctions the murder of Gentiles? What about dishonest Jews trying to hide behind Polish names? If the Arabs treated the Jews the way Israelis treat Palestinians, would not the Jews in America raise a hue and cry about anti-Semitism? Why do American Jews malign Poland?

I answer as best I can, and I conclude by saying that with only 4,000 Jews remaining here, as far as I am concerned Poland represents a closed chapter in Jewish history. Anti-Semitism in Poland is thus a purely Polish problem, like anti-Semitism in 17th-century Spain, when there were no Jews left in that country either.

Among all the participants in the discussion, only two are friendly. One woman apologizes for the inscription "Jews to the gas chamber," which I saw in Jaroslaw: "I want you to remember that at least one Pole was ashamed of it." And the other says she has been moved to tears by my command of Polish after more than four decades abroad.

Wednesday, June 6

I HAD met Kazimierz and Maria Piechotka the previous summer when they were guests of the International Survey of Jewish Monuments which is run at my university by two art historians, Raina and Philipp Fehl. The Piechotkas are both retired architects from Warsaw whose book on the wooden synagogues of old Poland I have long admired. And it is the Piechotkas who have organized today's excursion to what may be described as the Jewish ruins of northeastern Poland.

Our first stop is Tykocin, once a medium-sized commercial center and now the site of a large reconstructed synagogue. An eerie atmosphere pervades the spacious and mostly empty hall, made stranger still by the taped sound of cantorial chants. Remnants of old blessings and fragments of animal figures adorn the walls, and texts of Hebrew prayers and their Polish translations are found on the lecterns. Torah scrolls, crowns, breastplates, and pointers are enclosed in glass together with prayer shawls, phylacteries, and Hebrew Bibles. On the top floor of the museum we find a small room with a table set for the Sabbath, complete with candlesticks, challah coverings, and prayer books.

Encouraged in part by Tykocin's example, Byelorussian farmers from the vicinity of Orla, a small town not far from Bialystok, are currently at work rebuilding a similarly imposing synagogue. A section of the edifice is to be used as a club for the villagers, but the sanctuary will be restored to look like the old photographs of Orla's *shul*.

In Bialystok itself, there is no

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Jewish community, but the province's department of antiquities is compiling a catalogue of all extant Jewish tombstones, complete with Polish translations of the Hebrew inscriptions. And the journal *Bialystocczyzna* ("The Bialystok Country") occasionally prints articles dealing with the history of the region's Jews. One in a recent issue on the now defunct Jewish community of Krynka is well researched and sympathetic in tone.

Thursday, June 7

WE HAVE been told that the Jewish Historical Institute is located on Warsaw's Tlomackie Street. Scores of local shopkeepers, passersby, and even a policeman directing traffic have never heard of Tlomackie Street, and little wonder. A back alley of three houses has been so named to commemorate a street in prewar Warsaw where Jewish cultural institutions were located. Active enough during the early postwar years, the Jewish Historical Institute is now a shadow of its old self. Its Polish-language journal appears irregularly, and its activities reflect inadequate staffing, poor funding, and, perhaps most importantly, the lack of an interested public. The truth is borne in upon me once again: in Poland the Jews now exist only as a fading memory, as exotic objects of curiosity, or as the pathological obsession of inveterate anti-Semites.

Friday, June 8

I LEAVE with mixed feelings. There is the satisfaction of seeing a long-suffering nation once again free to shape its own destiny after five decades of Nazi and Communist rule. There is also the confidence that the Poles will overcome the economic difficulties they now face. At the same time, I am depressed that hatred of the Jews persists in a country in which hardly any Jews survive. That is why I am heartened to read, on the eve of the 44th anniversary of the 1946 pogrom in Kielce, an open letter from Lech Walesa appealing to his compatriots to abandon the pretense that the dastardly event was merely a Soviet provocation for which the Poles cannot be held responsible. Provocation or not, Walesa writes, the crime was perpetrated on Polish soil and the murderers were Polish. Walesa proposes that a plaque be unveiled in Kielce to commemorate the tragedy and to serve as a warning to generations to come.

The timing of Walesa's appeal has a special poignancy for me. I originally left Poland in the wake of the Kielce pogrom; it is gratifying to have returned for a visit just when repentance for this crime has been expressed by the man who (whatever his current relations with his ex-colleagues from Solidarity who are now running the country) has done more than any other to lead Poland back to freedom.

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Depression-as-Disease

DARKNESS VISIBLE: A MEMOIR OF MADNESS. By WILLIAM STYRON. *Random House. 84 pp. $15.95.*

Reviewed by CAROL IANNONE

WHEN an individual suffers the horrors of Auschwitz, survives to write inspiringly about man's ability to endure in extreme circumstances, but years later takes his own life over what many would deem no more than the ordinary unhappiness of the human condition, the event seems bound to become at the very least a source of sorrowful wonder. Such was the death of the Italian Jewish writer Primo Levi in 1987, and such was the mixture of shock, dismay, disappointment, puzzlement, and confusion expressed by admiring writers and critics at a conference held some months after his suicide.

But the response of the American novelist William Styron was quite different. When he read a report in the New York *Times* on the Levi conference, Styron was offended to learn that the participants seemed to feel that

> this man whom they had all so greatly admired, and who had endured so much at the hands of the Nazis—a man of exemplary resilience and courage—had by his suicide demonstrated a frailty, a crumbling of character they were loath to accept. In the face of a terrible absolute—self-destruction—their reaction was helplessness and (the reader could not avoid it) a touch of shame.

Styron countered this "touch of shame" by writing an op-ed article for the *Times* setting out an argument that is further substantiated in his latest, very slim, book, in which he also tells of his own battle with severe depression and suicidal behavior. "The argument I put forth was fairly straightforward," Styron now writes of his op-ed piece:

> The pain of severe depression is quite unimaginable to those who have not suffered it, and it kills in many instances because its anguish can no longer be borne. The prevention of many suicides will continue to be hindered until there is a general awareness of the nature of this pain. Through the healing process of time—and through medical intervention or hospitalization in many cases—most people survive depression, which may be its only blessing; but to the tragic legion who are compelled to destroy themselves there should be no more reproof attached than to the victims of terminal cancer.

Styron has made something of an avocation out of promulgating this view of depression-as-disease, and he sees his new book, combined with lectures and television appearances, as an effort both to help others similarly troubled and to help change social attitudes. But of course the "disease model" is nothing new in today's discourse; in fact, it has become the major means of characterizing numerous problems, like drug addiction and alcoholism, that were once seen as lapses in character or morality. So far from being new revelations, such characterizations may be passing their prime of acceptance; facing Kitty Dukakis's recent tell-all *Now You Know*, even a New York *Times* reviewer could write with a trace of weary condescension that "the sins and nasty habits of old are now labeled diseases . . . beyond the control of [their] victims. The idea of taking the moral blame and responsibility for failings has become passé." On the other hand, the fact that Styron's book has rocketed to the very top of the best-seller list seems to indicate that the disease model is still very much alive and well.

Behind the disease model, and behind the reverse moral righteousness of its purveyors, is a presumption that this approach lessens suffering, helps effect cures more readily, and alleviates the burden of inner worthlessness borne by depressives and others with similar disorders. But is it really such a liberation to adopt this model? Is it truly more helpful? Styron's own book offers plenty of grounds for doubt.

Take, to begin with, the book's tone. Significantly, Styron says that at one time he attempted to write a novel about his ordeal, but "the work ended up feeling artificial, and I abandoned it." The reader of *Darkness Visible* can easily see why. A lot of the time, Styron sounds like a second-rate Poe or Coleridge as he attempts, sensationalistically, melodramatically, to conjure up the horrors he experienced: "Doubtless depression had hovered near me for years, waiting to swoop down. Now I was in the first stage—premonitory, like a flicker of sheet lightning barely perceived—of depression's black tempest." Or: "Then, after dinner, sitting in the living room, I experienced a curious inner convulsion that I can describe only as despair beyond despair." Although Styron regrets the "indescribability" of depression, he seems actually to be relying for effect on the awe and sympathy that can accompany "the basic inability of healthy people to imagine a form of torment so alien to everyday experience." As with the Dukakis book and other celebrity tell-alls, one begins to feel uncomfortably that by writing about the experience the author is satisfying the very craving for attention and pity that was part of the problem to begin with.

BUT what about the physical elements which to a great extent form the basis of the disease model? Styron reports: "It has been established with reasonable certainty" that depression "results from an aberrant biochemical process" in the brain, a complex chain reaction among neurotransmitters, chemicals, and hormones. But this does not stop him from pronouncing as

CAROL IANNONE, *who reviews fiction regularly in these pages, teaches writing and literature at NYU's Gallatin Division and is a consulting editor of* Academic Questions.

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well that "the disease of depression remains a great mystery," or that "strident factionalism . . . exists in present-day psychiatry—the schism between the believers in psychotherapy and the adherents of pharmacology." It has not stopped him from disbelieving in the efficacy of either psychiatric school in advanced cases. And it has not stopped him from conjecturing inconclusively about a host of other factors as possible components of his own trouble—from turning sixty, to childhood loss, to alcoholic withdrawal, to tranquilizer overdose, to dissatisfaction with his work.

No more, one might add, has it stopped the proliferation of theories about the etiology of depression in the medical profession, where heredity, temperament, childhood deprivations, and life experiences in addition to hormonal imbalance are all invoked as contributors to the disease. With such a combination of elements, it seems that we know everything and nothing. In other words, to say the cause is physical seems ultimately to be saying very little. Styron's own greatest hope lies in the passage of time and "the passing of the storm. . . . Mysterious in its coming, mysterious in its going, the affliction runs its course, and one finds peace."

BUT the course of Styron's own emergence from depression and suicidal behavior makes us wonder, not only at this characterization of time as the main healer, but at his confident insistence that to understand and deal with depression, we must abandon the moral dimension. Two key scenes stand out in the drama of his recovery.

The columnist Art Buchwald was a close friend who kept in contact with Styron during his trouble. Among the ways Buchwald helped was in continually "admonishing me that suicide was unacceptable." Now, "unacceptable" may not be quite the equivalent of the "Everlasting" having "fixed his canon 'gainst self-slaughter" (*Hamlet*), but it's something. Thus, Styron's own resistance to suicide may have been strengthened by the very sort of moral consideration—however attenuated in the word "unacceptable"—he takes pains to decry in his book. Suppose Buchwald had counseled him—as Styron would have us all be counseled—that, given the situation, suicide was entirely understandable?

At another moment, at the very crisis of his ordeal, actually on the verge of suicide, Styron hears the Brahms *Alto Rhapsody*. The sound "pierced my heart like a dagger," he writes in one of the book's few animated passages,

> and in a flood of swift recollection I thought of all the joys the house had known: the children who had rushed through its rooms, the festivals, the love and work, the honestly earned slumber, the voices and the nimble commotion, the perennial tribe of cats and dogs and birds. . . . All this I realized was more than I could ever abandon, even as what I had set out so deliberately to do was more than I could inflict on those memories, and upon those, so close to me, with whom the memories were bound. And just as powerfully I realized I could not commit this desecration on myself. I drew upon some last gleam of sanity to perceive the terrifying dimensions of the mortal predicament I had fallen into.

What was happening here? Did not this flow of thoughts and impressions bring Styron to a choice in favor of life over death? What, then, at this point, were all his neurotransmitters and chemicals and hormones up to? Did those merciless gods turn their heads at the fatal moment? Clearly what happened was that Styron's self-absorption was suddenly broken, permitting the entrance of healing thoughts, and, importantly, of concern for others. Similarly, Buchwald, himself a recovering depressive, had reported that helping Styron was "a continuing therapy for him," but from this Styron draws entirely the wrong lesson—that "the disease engenders lasting fellowship." What helped Buchwald was getting out of himself, feeling the blessedness of being useful to another. This release from self is the process at work in Tolstoy's Levin in *Anna Karenina*, who loses his morbid preoccupations when a peasant tells him that he must not live for himself but for God, or in a woman I know whose long depression was lifted when she heeded the admonition of an aunt to think of her children instead of herself.

Thinking in terms of choice, responsibility, or even "sin" is not a means of self-condemnation, which is after all another sin, but of liberation and redemption. Though the idea of sinfulness seems to make people furious nowadays—we are supposed to be wonderful in all points—really sin is simply a way of describing the essential flawedness of human nature and the human condition, reparable by recourse to the transcendent, or by opening oneself to an order of experience larger than the self. Thousands of years ago the Psalmist sang of this experience, while also incidentally evincing an awareness of the very physical symptoms of depression Styron writes about:

> . . . When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long./ For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer./ I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. . . . ./ Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about./ Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

ANOTHER basis for the disease model—not invoked by Styron—may be Alcoholics Anonymous, but the AA program shows a deep understanding of the human character that much current discourse does not. It is true that AA calls alcoholism a disease—the term has been applied as well to the many other disorders, including depression, treated through the AA twelve-step program—but it does so mainly for the purposes of relieving the alcoholic of useless self-condemnation, of any tendency to blame others for his drinking, or of the temptation to spend fruitless energy searching for the cause. It is not meant to

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relieve him of responsibility for his plight. Once the "disease" has been acknowledged, the individual then embarks on a program of recovery in which he must "take his inventory," or, as it would have been called in another age, examine his conscience, a process that can be demanding enough to satisfy a puritan saint. The individual must also make amends for past behavior that has been hurtful to others. Behind all this is the notion that faulty moral and characterological habits do indeed lead to the confusions and messes that can make a person escape into drink or drugs or depression.

Another apparently neglected aspect of these programs is the requirement of anonymity. It may be thought that this requirement was originally designed to protect the alcoholic from the glare of a disapproving society, and that now, in our radically altered social climate, it is no longer necessary. But there is yet another important reason for anonymity, and that is the need for humility, something severely compromised when one draws wide-scale attention to one's problems. The celebrity revolving-door-clinic, book-tour, and media-appearance approach seems to show little awareness of these aspects of the twelve-step program, concentrating exclusively on the disease concept which, by itself, can be efficacious only to a limited point.

It is really quite amazing how Styron manages to protect himself from any awareness along these lines. To describe his depression he boldly uses the famous opening stanza of the *Inferno* ("In the middle of the journey of our life/ I found myself in a dark wood,/ For I had lost the right path") and closes his book with the hopeful closing line of that same canticle ("And so we came forth, and once again beheld the stars") while studiously managing to ignore completely what comes in between.

The "sullen," as they are called in John Ciardi's translation of the *Inferno*, are Dante's version of the depressive, and they float beneath the surface of a muddy ditch in one of the upper circles of hell, gurgling: "Sullen were we in the air made sweet by the Sun;/ in the glory of his shining our hearts poured/ a bitter smoke." At a much lower circle Dante comes upon the wood of the suicides. There he experiences deep compassion with the poignant plight of Pier delle Vigne, and is overcome by emotion (as often happens when he is more in sympathy with the sinner than with divine justice). But ultimately Dante will not revoke the moral law which represents his own salvation and the salvation of all, and which he knows is intricately connected to the sufferings men endure and inflict. After *this* knowledge, there *is* forgiveness.

Before we heed the prophets who try to comfort us with assurances that our fate is entirely out of our hands, we should at least become aware of the alternatives.

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The Special Relationship

BLOOD, CLASS, AND NOSTALGIA: ANGLO-AMERICAN IRONIES. By CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS. *Farrar Straus Giroux. 398 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by GEORGE RUSSELL

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS, British-born, Oxford-educated, a columnist for the *Nation* and Washington editor of *Harper's*, a widely published book reviewer, and a doer of countless other odd jobs, is a highly visible piece of leftist bric-a-brac in East Coast literary salons. On a given day his objects of scorn might include anybody in the democratic West—with the exception, always, of Gore Vidal—but with special spleen reserved for American culture and foreign policy, and, betimes, for Israel. These last targets have given him a certain currency in British Tory circles as well; he has also written for the idiosyncratically conservative London *Spectator*. He is a busy fellow indeed, and everywhere he bites, usually with condescension, the hand that feeds him.

In his public persona, Hitchens is thus a near-perfect example of what he claims to analyze, in overlarded and self-regarding language and at tedious length, in *Blood, Class, and Nostalgia*: British affectations of the second or third water, embraced, adopted, and carried on high by the Anglophiliac classes of the New World. As Hitchens himself puts it early on in his enterprise: "Not for nothing is hypocrisy known as an English vice."

What is his enterprise? The ostensible aim of *Blood, Class, and Nostalgia* is to analyze the "special relationship" between Britain and the United States, a term which entered currency with World War II and which now, amid the dramatic reorganization of Europe, is rapidly losing its luster. But that is really only the starting point of Hitchens's ambitions. His real purpose is to construct a proof, organized in genealogical form, of the global existence of American imperialism: the eternal Marxist equivalent of the proof for the existence of God. But in this case there is the added fillip that in Hitchens's argument the transformation of the United States from sturdy revolutionary republic to global *hegemon* was not a homegrown phenomenon but almost entirely a matter of British inspiration.

The fillip is important, for reasons that Hitchens takes pains to make unclear. The British did truly and unapologetically rule an empire, and the terminology and ambition that Hitchens wishes so fervently to attach to the rise of American postwar power are historically of British patent. Binding the fact of American world influence to an image of British tutelage is thus the necessary condition for making his claims of American imperialism stick. In a rare moment of candor, however, Hitchens admits that what he is striving to uncover is "metaphorical truth"—by which he seems to mean the substitution of figures of speech for reason and fact.

Most of *Blood* is, in short, a literary rather than a historical exercise, a major reason for its many incoherences, discontinuities, and lack of rigor. Hitchens is looking less to establish proofs than to assert resonances, overarching figurative themes that substitute for argument. He has a dense field to play upon: in the immense interweaving of personal, political, economic, cultural, and family ties between Britain and the United States, which has gone on without cease since the 17th century, Hitchens finds his conspiratorial cement. In particular, the allegedly manipulative relationship between Britain's ruling elite and America has been expressed in the cultivation of Anglophilia. "I know of no other country," says Hitchens—ignoring the British Commonwealth—"that has such a great weakness for things that originate in England. . . ."

HITCHENS finds one of the crux points of the "special relationship" in a remark made in 1943 by the future Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to Richard H. S. Crossman, later one of the great anti-Communist sachems of the British Labor party. "We, my dear Crossman," said Macmillan, "are Greeks in this American Empire." Macmillan later repeated the remark to his staff: "These Americans represent the new Roman Empire and we Britons, like the Greeks of old, must teach them how to make it go."

Hitchens pursues these twin themes, of seduction/instruction and the transfer of imperial power, across a selected swath of history, largely from the American Civil War onward. He dwells upon the long wooing of the United States, and of Theodore Roosevelt in particular, to the notion of Anglo-American global condominium. He expatiates upon the wave of 19th- and early 20th-century marriages that bound together the British aristocracy and the American plutocracy. And he credits Winston Churchill, yet another Anglo-American product, with pulling the United States into World War I by conspiring to put the *Lusitania* in the way of German torpedoes. (Hitchens finds the case for this "excellent.") Churchill's role in inveigling the U.S. into World War II goes without saying, while his unabashed imperialist views are, Hitchens assures us, what is behind the cult of reverence for him in the U.S.: he is "an ideal fetish object for American 'hawks.'"

But Churchill is also an example of the seducer seduced: an imperialist who lived to see his global possessions and ambitions appropriated by ruthless Americans. And this is the final irony of Hitchens's scenario, that in the post-World War II period, a U.S. "invaded repeatedly by English manners and English tastes" had turned the tables on its erstwhile tutor. Britain had "called in the New World to redress the balance of the Old, and then found that it was the New World doing the calling."

To sum up this strange view: the rise of American power owes everything to British cultural and social manipulation, even when, in the end, it has all worked against the British interest. But herein Hitchens also finds some good news: like the power of Britain before it,

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GEORGE RUSSELL, *whose article, "Trashing Wall Street," appeared in our July issue, is a senior editor at* Time *magazine.*

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the power of the United States too is declining as we enter a "coming polycentric century," in tandem with the dilution of America's Anglophiliac classes. It will now be a splendid thing, he muses, if "the United States decided to become less Roman, and the British decided to become more Greek, and both rediscovered republican virtues in a world without conquerors."

WHAT are we to make of this curious tissue of metaphoric assertions? *Blood, Class, and Nostalgia* is largely an effort at guilt by insinuation, a genre for which the author has considerable talent. But, studded throughout as it is with references to the "deep grammar" of the special relationship between Britain and the U.S., the book is also a heavyhanded effort to apply concepts of Marxist structuralism that first came into vogue among British leftists in the late 1960's. Those ideas were largely inspired by the works of Louis Althusser, one of the grand theologians of the French Communist party, who, when *he* imagined "republican virtues," undoubtedly dreamed of those that would be embedded in a future People's Republic of France. It is tempting to think of Christopher Hitchens consigned to such an Althusserian place. Tempting, but impractical—so few hands to bite, fewer still to feed from.

Prelude to Modernity

VIENNA AND THE JEWS, 1867-1938: A CULTURAL HISTORY. By STEVEN BELLER. *Cambridge University Press. 271 pp. $34.50.*
THE JEWS OF VIENNA IN THE AGE OF FRANZ JOSEPH. By ROBERT S. WISTRICH. *Oxford University Press. 696 pp. $79.00.*

Reviewed by DANA MACK

IT WAS in turn-of-the-century Vienna, seed-plot of the modern intellect, that Sigmund Freud developed his psychoanalytic theories; that the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein first posited a formal relationship between language and the real world; that the composer Arnold Schoenberg abandoned tonality and embarked on the restructuring of music; that the architect Adolf Loos first realized an aesthetic of unimpassioned functionalism. The greatly altered world left behind by these and other groundbreaking modernist artists and thinkers is still the object of hot debate. Today, the legacy of modernism is less and less regarded as an unqualified success; yet historians of Vienna still tend to defend it.

In doing so, they point to the vulgarity of the milieu from which, and against which, the modernist movement emerged. This is not a new theme: in the late 1940's Hermann Broch wrote of the ethical "value-vacuum" of 19th-century

DANA MACK, *a new contributor, writes on music and cultural affairs for the* New Criterion.

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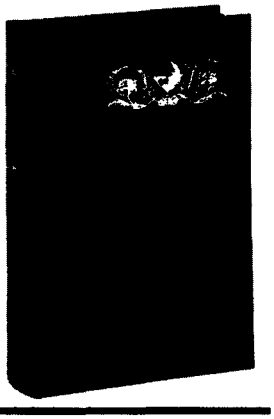

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Europe and of its reflection in *kitsch* on the one hand and "evil" art on the other—the one relentlessly decorative, the other relentlessly Wagnerian. For Broch, the poet and dramatist Hugo von Hofmannsthal (who also wrote several memorable librettos for Richard Strauss) represented an attempt to reform European culture by restoring its Christian values; the failure of this attempt was ascribed by Broch at least in part to the contemporary public's unregenerate "promiscuity of thought and feeling." In *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria,* William McGrath similarly dwells on the influence of the Wagnerian aesthetic; notwithstanding his sympathy for exemplars of this "theatrical" cultural ideal, and especially for the composer Gustav Mahler and the socialist leader Viktor Adler, McGrath also admits its dangerous connection to the rise of an anti-liberal politics. Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin in *Wittgenstein's Vienna* likewise regard the Viennese modernist flowering as a movement aimed at instilling honesty, sense, and meaning in a culture steeped in sentiment and affectation.

This reading of Vienna has not gone unchallenged. Carl Schorske's *Fin de Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (1979) presents a Viennese modernism marked not by the promise of spiritual elevation but by subversiveness and prurience, its symbolizing products being the suggestive, even macabre paintings of Gustav Klimt and Oskar Kokoschka. Schorske's book, and others in the same vein that seem fixated on matters sexual (epitomized in the scandalous liaisons of Alma Mahler Werfel), prompt the question of just who was the dissolute party in turn-of-the-century Vienna—the much-maligned society, or its innovative cultural elite?

Now we have two books which tackle the origins of modernism from an altogether different angle. Both Steven Beller and Robert Wistrich focus on the fermentation of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna as a specifically Jewish response to the promise and the disappointments of emancipation and Enlightenment—and especially to the rise of anti-Semitism.

The importance of Jews in Vienna's cultural life has often been noted, but Steven Beller is the first to offer a statistical analysis and breakdown. What Beller proves is that Viennese intellectuals and artists, and their patrons and audience, came disproportionately from a single social and ethnic stratum: the hard-working Jewish bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie, according to Beller, was infused with a gravity and sobriety unusual in a south German, Catholic milieu. Among Austrian Jews—far more than among their Catholic brethren—German ethical liberalism was a deeply rooted creed. After all, it had been the values of the German Enlightenment which had provided the greatest impetus to Jewish emancipation; and those values constituted no less than the moral and spiritual defense of Jewish "integration into Western culture and society."

No wonder, then, that Vienna's Jewish intellectuals, even those who had taken the route of formal apostasy from the community, clung to them as well. For Beller, Viennese modernism represented to a large degree an attempt to restore the virtues of Enlightenment propriety and earnestness to a frivolous and intolerant culture. He instances the "radical ethical individualism" of the stinging cultural critic Karl Kraus; the "stoicism" of the philosopher of language, Ludwig Wittgenstein; the decorous twelve-tone technique of the composer Arnold Schoenberg; the astute psychological portraits of the dramatist Arthur Schnitzler. In each of these he sees evidence of a deep-seated ethical humanism, detached from the prevailing romantic *Zeitgeist* and bent always on ensuring the integrity of individual expression.

Beller is perhaps more convinced of Viennese Jewish cultural sobriety than the evidence altogether warrants; Viennese Jews were quite active, as well, in the creation and support of an often trivial and giddily licentious popular culture. Moreover, not even Schoenberg was immune to the attraction of Johann Strauss waltzes, and the paintings of the Secession (*Jugendstil*) were attractive to Jews not least as derivatives of an ornate and sensual Austrian baroque. Gustav Mahler, an inveterate romantic, does not fit into Beller's scheme, and neither, really, does the all-too-consciously piquant Schnitzler. But clearly Beller is right in his broad placement of the Jewish component in the creation of modernist culture. And an overall implication of his study is well worth underscoring: that the subsequent victimization and murder of European Jewry coincided with a ruthless attack on ethical humanism and the high culture informed by it.

Steven Beller's book constitutes, in fact, something of an impassioned apology for ethical humanism, and for what might be called the Jewish secular achievement in culture. Robert S. Wistrich, by contrast, is far less sanguine about just these things. His book, broader in range than Beller's, examines the Jewish intellectual elite in the context of the Jewish community as a whole. Wistrich regards the cultural productivity of Viennese Jewry as a somewhat bitter fruit, evidence perhaps of a "residual Judaic sense of moral mission" but fatally divorced from the supports of religious tradition and community. It thus, in his view, contributed in some measure to the spiritual helplessness of Jews in the face of the siege laid against them with the rise of anti-Semitism in late 19th-century Europe.

Among some acculturated Viennese Jews, it is true, the resurgence of anti-Semitism did provoke an answering revival of Jewish national feeling, bolstered by a new appreciation of their own recently abandoned cultural tradition. Theodor Herzl, the major articulator of political Zionism, was not alone in turning for inspiration to ancient sources; others included the dramatists Richard Beer Hoffmann and Stefan Zweig, both of whom wrote late works based on biblical themes. And Arnold Schoenberg's uncompleted opera *Moses and Aaron* represents perhaps the most significant attempt to reconcile a

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modernist aesthetic sensibility with pristine monotheism.

These, Wistrich implies, reflected the healthier side of a cultural engagement with the problem of anti-Semitism. There was, however, another, dominant side, marked by hopelessness and "apocalyptic nihilism." Where Steven Beller sees in Viennese aesthetic individualism an affirmation of the humane, Wistrich finds in it evidence of spiritual isolation and inconsolable pessimism. For Wistrich, Karl Kraus is not so much a fearless critic as a desperate "prophet of doom." He points, too, to the ugly self-hatred of the philosopher Otto Weininger, and to the resigned "Austrian sickness" (*morbus Austraicus*) of the apostate novelist Joseph Roth, as examples of the dark, debilitating side of the Jewish embrace of secular Enlightenment.

PERHAPS the primary beneficiaries and purveyors of the modern European values of secular, rational, tolerant, liberal humanism, Jews were also uniquely vulnerable, and, for those who had moved out of the community, uniquely bereft of inner defenses, when the European temper changed and these values came under attack. In the politics, the culture, and the art of turn-of-the-century Vienna, as Steven Beller and Robert Wistrich show in their different ways, one can see the first workings-out of some of the most complex, terrifying, and still unresolved themes of our own age.

Psephology

OUR COUNTRY: THE SHAPING OF AMERICA FROM ROOSEVELT TO REAGAN. By MICHAEL BARONE. *Free Press. 805 pp. $29.95.*

Reviewed by AUSTIN RANNEY

THIS book is mislabeled. The title promises that it will do for 1932-88 what Mark Sullivan's *Our Times* did for 1900-25 and Frederick Lewis Allen's *Only Yesterday* did for 1920-30. Barone's book is even longer than theirs, but his focus is much narrower: it is essentially an *electoral* history, an account of the presidential and congressional campaigns and elections from the launching of the New Deal to the end of Reagan's second term.

Barone concentrates mainly on explaining why particular aspirants got their parties' presidential nominations, what kind of campaigns they put on, why one candidate or another won the general elections, and why each party's share of the seats in Congress increased or decreased. To buttress his explanation he often throws in brief between-elections descriptions of the state of the economy, longer descriptions of struggles over legislation, and even longer analyses of the state of public opinion. But his book will interest mainly psephology buffs (like me); there is little in it for people who might want to know about sports, music, sexual mores, the status of women and minorities, television programming, or any of the many other aspects of American life that have changed so radically since 1932.

Barone has been best known as the co-editor, with Grant Ujifusa, of *The Almanac of American Politics*, an invaluable series of biennial compilations of presidential and congressional election returns supplemented by short profiles of the winners. His experience explains many of this book's virtues and failings. On the virtues side, its 670 pages of text and 93 pages of endnotes provide by far the most massive collection of electoral facts and "factlets" (the term is one of Nelson Polsby's contributions to the vocabulary of political analysis) ever published in a single book. This yields, among other happy results, a number of nuggets for the psephologists' version of *Trivial Pursuit*.

I learned from Barone, for exam-

AUSTIN RANNEY *is professor of political science at the University of California, Berkeley.*

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ple, that 1935 was the year in which public-opinion polling began to play a role in American political life: not only did George Gallup publish his first "public" survey that year but Jim Farley, worried about FDR's prospects for 1936, asked Emil Hurja, a statistician employed by the Democratic National Committee, to take a poll measuring how FDR's popularity compared with that of his most feared potential opponent, Huey Long. Another such nugget: Barone notes that 1954 was the first year in which a majority of American households had television sets (although he has little to say about what difference that made for subsequent campaigns and elections).

SOME of the facts unearthed by Barone puncture hardy myths about American electoral politics. Thus, a good many political scientists (including me) have deplored the way we now choose our presidential candidates by entrepreneurial contests among individual candidates scrambling for large campaign funds with which to build attractive images for otherwise ignorant voters who at the stage of primaries can know them only from what they present of themselves on television. In the good old days, we all imply and many of us declare, presidential candidates were nominated by "peer review." National, state, and local party bosses and public officials, together with other insiders like union and business tycoons, would meet in smoke-filled rooms at quadrennial conventions, cut a few deals, and tell the delegates under their control how to vote. We got good candidates that way because the people who picked them knew each other and knew first hand the aspirants' strengths and weaknesses.

Barone, however, reports that it really was not much like that. In discussing FDR's nomination in 1932, he comments:

> In the days when Americans had to travel four days and change trains to get from one coast to another, when the words "long-distance call" still turned heads even in the offices of successful businessmen—and when telephone connections were still prone to go dead or were plagued with static, as was the case with one important call from Roosevelt's managers in Chicago to the governor in Albany—most American politicians did not know each other and did not meet except at those week-long gatherings held every four years.

Not all of Barone's factlets are so suggestive; some are merely tantalizing. For example, in the course of describing how Eisenhower won the 1952 Republican nomination, he writes:

> Playing key roles for Eisenhower at the convention were John Minor Wisdom of Louisiana and Elbert Parr Tuttle of Georgia, who as Eisenhower appointees to the Fifth Circuit federal appellate court would play a vital role in the civil-rights revolution through decisions to which Eisenhower himself was far from sympathetic.

But in the following 56-page account of the Eisenhower administration we learn very little about Eisenhower's distaste for the civil-rights revolution, and Wisdom and Tuttle are never mentioned again.

BARONE says in his introduction that his book is "undergirded by three guiding theses":

First, American politics more often divides along cultural and ethnic than along economic lines; as he puts it, "In America, with its racial diversity, geographic mobility, and immigrant heritage, politics has often been a struggle to define *who is really an American*" (emphasis in the original).

Second, in time of war, America, like other countries, tends to choose bigger government and cultural uniformity, while in time of peace we tend to want smaller government and cultural diversity.

Third, people—individual human beings—matter. Of course large demographic trends, economic developments, technological change, and so forth, matter too. But great men like Franklin Roosevelt can do great good even under adverse conditions, while flawed men like Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Jimmy Carter can do great harm even under favorable conditions.

Barone asks that his theses be taken seriously, and they should be. Perhaps the most appropriate way for a political scientist to evaluate them is to ask how well he supports them. If we accept the dictionary definition of a "thesis" as "a proposition to be discussed and proved or disproved by evidence and discussion," I think we have to give his first thesis the old Scottish legal verdict of "not proved." He supports it mainly by discussing the voting patterns in large regions (the South, the Rust Belt, the Sun Belt) and in large ethnic groups (blacks, women, Hispanics); to these he imputes, without really proving, uniform or at least central political-cultural characteristics that lead the majority to vote for one candidate rather than another.

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Setting aside the question of why sizable minorities of those regions and groups have often voted for losers, some of Barone's explanations are dashed off without much reflection or credibility. For example, in explaining why Kennedy carried the black vote in 1960, he retells a story first told by Theodore White:

> At the same time, Nixon's unwillingness to lend support to Martin Luther King, Jr., when he was jailed on a trumped-up traffic charge in rural Georgia in October, combined with Robert Kennedy's reflex decision to phone Mrs. King, *meant that Republicans lost the bulk of the black vote in the North. . . .* [Emphasis added]

Political science has been described by some as "slow journalism," but this passage might well be called "hasty political science." What proportion of black voters even knew about Robert Kennedy's call? Of those who did, what proportion switched from Nixon to John Kennedy because of his brother's call? After all, as Barone has previously shown, blacks have voted massively for Democratic candidates ever since the mid-1930's.

This minor lapse is an illustration of a much larger fault in Barone's analysis. He makes extensive use of public-opinion polls, especially Gallup's reports of popular approval or disapproval of how Presidents do their jobs. But that is about all. He gives us only what the people in the polling business call "marginals"—that is, the percent approving and the percent disapproving. He rarely uses any kind of "multivariate analysis" to break down the Gallup reports so as to show the differences among regional, ethnic, sexual, and other groups in their rates of approval or disapproval—a form of analysis sorely needed to evaluate the thesis that Americans divide more along cultural than economic lines.

Moreover, Barone makes no reference to, let alone use of, the great body of work by political scientists and social psychologists over the past thirty years on why people vote as they do. One of the most egregious of many such omissions comes in his discussion of the 1952 and 1956 presidential elections. The attitudes and behavior of voters in those elections were studied in great depth by a distinguished group of political scientists at the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan. Barone does not even cite, let alone use, the 1960 book, *The American Voter*, reporting their findings.

To take Barone's theses out of order, his third—that the quality of individual leadership matters politically, and that election outcomes like other political phenomena are not the inevitable results of massive impersonal economic and social developments—has been worked over by a long succession of writers from Carlyle and Hegel through Nietzsche, Tolstoy, and Spengler, to Churchill and Paul Kennedy. All have written brilliant and stimulating books, and none has settled the question once and for all. Neither does Barone—not because he handles it badly, but because such a many-faceted proposition is probably too large to be called a "thesis," in the sense that it can be proved or disproved by established methods whose results will be generally accepted.

For me the most illuminating part of Barone's book comes in his consideration at various points of his second thesis—that in wartime, Americans tend to prefer bigger government and cultural uniformity, while in peacetime they tend to prefer smaller government and cultural diversity. This thesis wins a few and loses a few. It certainly is not supported by the New Deal era, in which, by his and everyone else's account, Americans wanted bigger government to end the Depression and ensure that nothing like it would happen again, and when there was little demand for cultural diversity. It is, however, strongly supported by his account of the domestic political side of World War II, and by the dominant moods of the Reagan era. It is supported a bit less well by election outcomes during the Korean war, and sharply contradicted by what happened in those elections (1966-74) dominated by how people felt about the war in Vietnam.

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Barone's discussion of Vietnam, one of the highlights of the book, leads him to an important generalization to which he returns several times without elevating it to the same status as his three "undergirding theses." He begins by citing a series of 1965 Gallup polls in which respondents were asked to choose among not two but five alternatives for American policy in Southeast Asia: withdraw unconditionally; stop fighting and start negotiating; continue the present policy; step up our military activity; go all out to win. Not one of those alternatives was ever supported by more than 20 percent. Barone's comment is right on target:

> . . . there was . . . wisdom in the voters' untutored, instinctive responses. They were less interested in endorsing methods than they were in obtaining results. Victory was an acceptable response, and so was withdrawal. What wasn't acceptable, it turned out, was the bloody stalemate produced by the Johnson decisions, each one of which the voters endorsed at the moment it was announced.

He offers the same kind of explanation for a number of other major political developments. In discussing the historic landslide reelection of his hero, FDR, in the 1936 election, Barone writes:

> Americans were not voting that year a once-and-for-all endorsement of the politics of economic redistribution Roosevelt was championing, much less of liberal schemes some of Roosevelt's advisers believed he would adopt if he felt politically able to do so. They were voting for a President and his party for a limited time in a particular set of circumstances, at a time when their policies seemed to be working and their opponents presented no serious alternative. . . .

And in the same vein Barone writes that Carter lost to Reagan in 1980 because a majority of the voters felt that things were not going very well, while Mondale lost to Reagan in 1984 and Dukakis lost to Bush in 1988 not because the voters had become convinced conservatives but because they thought things were going very well at home and we were at peace abroad.

IN SHORT, although Barone apparently is not aware of it or does not think it important enough, his book makes a very convincing case, heavily supported by massive data and the author's characteristic explanations of election outcomes, that most Americans, most of the time, vote *pragmatically*. Like their most recent presidential choice, they are not much on "the vision thing," and they do not ask which candidate or party has the better master plan for the kind of America we should strive for fifty or a hundred years down the road. They ask, rather, whether things are on the whole going well or badly; if, broadly speaking, they like what they see, they vote to reelect incumbents, and if they do not like what they see they vote for change.

Another well-known taker of the public pulse, Richard Scammon, has put the point succinctly in his standard reply to the question, will the Democrats ever elect a President again? Some psephologists have come to call his reply Scammon's Law, and it goes like this: "There is nothing wrong with the Democrats that 12-percent unemployment won't cure; and there is nothing wrong with the Republicans that 12-percent inflation won't cure."

Since Barone takes essentially the same view, in future editions of his book he might well drop one of his three "undergirding theses" (I would suggest number three) and replace it with his own well-argued and well-supported version of Scammon's Law. Some such change might make even better a book which is a highly readable collection and arrangement of facts and factlets about who has been who and what has been what in American politics since 1930—but it is not, I think, an analysis that forces us to change significantly many generally accepted views of why American presidential and congressional elections from Roosevelt to Bush came out the way they did.

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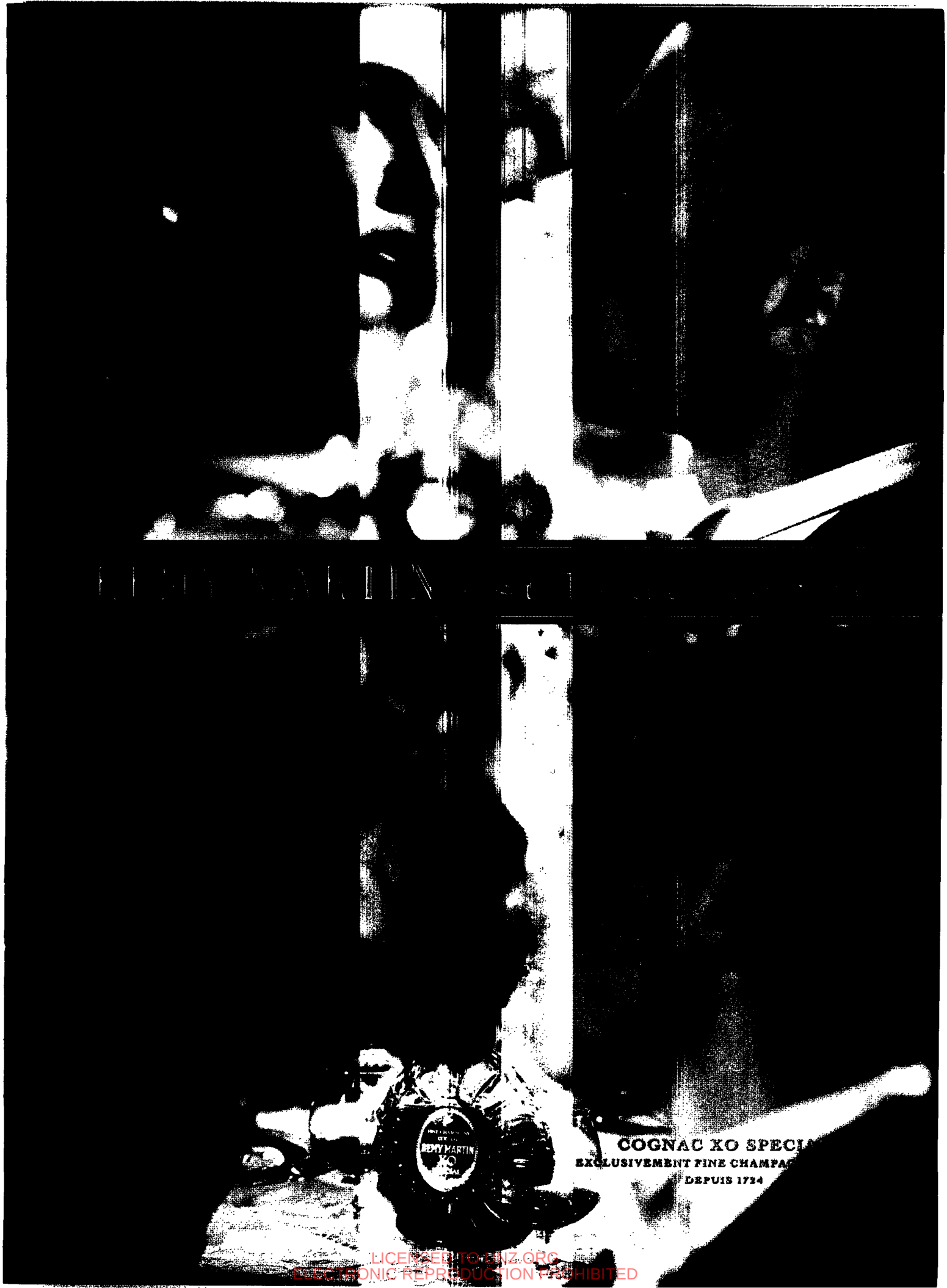

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